

ONLY A LOVE STORY

BY IZA DUFFUS HARDY



LONDON: F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, SOUTHAMPTON ST., STRAND

ONLY A LOVE-STORY.

BY

IZA DUFFUS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF

“NOT EASILY JEALOUS,” “LOVE, HONOUR AND OBEY,” ETC.

A New Edition.

LONDON:

F. V. WHITE & CO.,

31, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

PRINTED BY
KELLY AND CO., GATE STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, W.C. ;
AND KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.

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ONLY A LOVE STORY.

BOOK I.

IN THE HAPPY MORNING OF LIFE AND OF MAY.

“The thrushes sang,
And shook my pulses and the elm’s new leaves;
At which I turned and held my finger up,
And bade him mark that, howsoever the world
Went ill, as he related, certainly
The thrushes still sang in it.

I was glad that day;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx split—
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God!
So glad, I could not choose be very wise!”
E. B. BROWNING.

CHAPTER I.

“SWEET IS ALL THE LAND ABOUT AND ALL THE FLOWERS THAT BLOW.”

It is early in the evening, and early in “the merry month of May.” The season may be spring by the almanack, but by the sun and sky and flowering trees this day has been pure summer.

The London street is warm and still; even the much abused London sky is blue for once, as clear and stainless a blue as Italy ever knows, though of less rich and intense a tint than that which glorifies the heaven of Italy, and seems to veil in radiance its measureless depths.

It is the last half-hour of daylight, and no fleck of cloud floats in the faultless azure from horizon to horizon. But the inhabitants

of Clarence Street have no horizon-line; two parallel rows of brick and mortar compose all their view, and shut out all sights of spring and summer save the broad belt of beautiful blue heaven above. The square straight outlines of wall and window all the length of the long street are unbroken by the grace of a single curve; and from the dingy chimney-pots down to the pavements that are dusty white when there is sunshine, and muddy brown when there is rain, not a gleam of brightening colour, nor a leaf of refreshing green, catches the eye, save in one or two places, where courageous and constant lovers of flowers have set forth pots of those frail beauties on their window-sills, to droop in the London dust, and die in the London smoke.

There is one more sign of the season still—the itinerant flower-man, with his barrow, is abroad, carrying a breath of the country with him, looking up at each house as he passes to utter his sing-song shout of “All a-blowin’, and a-growin’.” He has had some custom already this evening; he transacts a little more business now at No. 21. The invalid lady in the front parlour, lying on the couch by the window, sends out the little maid-of-all-work to strike a bargain for a pot of hyacinths and an early geranium. The landlady in the back parlour is not so extravagant. There are no flowers blooming in her dingy back yard; she “doesn’t see what people want with flowers in London—they’ll only die!” Still she steps out of her parlour to look and sniff at the white geranium which slipshod, grimy-faced, and grimier-aproned little Polly (who sees trees and green grass once a year) is carrying with a broad smile of delight into Miss Howard’s room.

All the windows of the house are more or less open; all its various inmates are, in one way or another, enjoying the mild evening air. The elderly bachelor in the third-floor front, under-clerk in a lawyer’s office, on hard work and small pay, is looking out of his window across the dusty street to the opposite chimney-pots, and smoking bad tobacco; the young man in the third-floor back has laid down his pen, and is looking out of his window, across the backyards, where clothes-lines swing and droop, and smoking a tolerably good cigar. The little dressmaker’s girl in the second-floor back is carefully watering and tending a pink primula in a pot, one of her rare sallies of extravagance. A light breeze stirs the petals of the flower as it stands on the window-sill; the girl gives a sigh of pleasure and of memory as she lays her face close down to the leaves. She was born in the country, and she will never, even if she lives to be an old woman, which is scarcely a probability, attain to the condition of the gentleman to whom “a primrose by the river’s brim” was a yellow primrose and nothing more.

Although the drawing-room floor is unoccupied and placarded “To let,” there are still two other inhabitants of this mixed house,

hold. In the second-floor front room are two ladies—one a mere girl, almost a child still; the other past the prime of life, although it could scarcely yet be said that she had “fallen into the sear and yellow leaf.” They are aunt and niece. The aunt, Mrs. King, dressed in well-worn black, in which she still somehow looks every inch a lady, is sitting in the one armchair of which the room can boast; and *that* is not an easy-chair except in name, with its hard wooden arms and stiff, upright back. The niece, Calla Yorke, is standing by the window, with a letter in her hand, which she is not reading, but folding, unfolding, and playing with it.

She is nearly sixteen, just the awkward transition age, when the grace of childhood has past and the grace of womanhood is not yet formed; and even her best friends could not maintain that Calla Yorke is one of those girls who escape the awkwardness of the age and grow gracefully up from child to woman. She is tall enough to give one the impression of having outgrown her strength (a false impression, for she is as strong as a young lioness); her figure is unformed and immature enough to make her height seem ungraceful; she is indifferent and careless about her toilette; her simple and scanty dress, run up, regardless of fashion, by her own busy fingers, does not set her off to the best advantage; her hair is pushed away from her face and carelessly coiled into a net, in a style too *négligé* to be becoming. Still there is the material that makes beauty in her face, fine featured and clear complexioned; there is a freedom about her air and attitude that promises grace some day.

She holds her head high and lightly as she looks up at the summer sky; she is full of restless youth and energy, so that it seems a difficulty to her to keep still: her supple figure sways, as if keeping time to an unsung tune; her slender fingers maltreat the letter they hold, and her foot beats a light tattoo on the floor, not in any impatience or agitation, but simply in an exuberance of vitality and nervous energy that must find its outlet in some form of action. She looks as if she could only be still or statuesque in sleep.

“The Darrells don’t know that we have come down, or rather come *up*, in the world, I suppose—up from Clarence Terrace first-floor to Clarence Street second-floor! I dare say they imagine us in possession of a complete suite of apartments here,” she observes, in a clear full voice, a semi-tone deeper than most girls’ voices, glancing gaily round the one apartment which serves as bedroom, drawing-room, and dining-room to her aunt and herself.

“We might be worse off,” rejoins Mrs. King placidly.

“That we might, auntie. For my part, first, second, or third-floor doesn’t make any difference to me. But, I say, anntie, this is what I’m thinking—when Felix Grey calls, as they say he will, there arises the awful question, ‘*Where* are we to receive him?’ If he were only a woman!—but is it the correct thing for us to receive a

gentleman up here?" inquired Calla, who had never been abroad in her life, and to whom the life of hotels and boarding-houses was consequently unknown ground. "If he would give us fair warning, we might arrange things somehow," she continued; "but he will walk in unexpectedly. Shall we tell him we've got the sweeps in our sitting-room?"

"I think I have a better idea than that, my pet," said her aunt, smiling. "If the drawing-rooms are still unlet when he calls, I will ask Mrs. Smith, as a favour, to allow us to receive a visitor there."

"Oh, a capital idea!" exclaimed Calla eagerly. "If only they will keep vacant till he comes! Shall I ask Mrs. Smith about it now? I am going to see Miss Howard. I haven't been in to see her all day."

"Yes; poor Miss Howard! She says you always cheer her up. Go down and talk to her, and try to amuse her a little, dear. But I think you had better let Mrs. Smith alone. Leave her to me."

"All right," said Calla, with a nod and a smile, and made a rapid exit from the room, shutting the door behind her energetically (as she did most things) with an energy that shut her own dress in the door. The dress tore at the gathers, the wearer exclaimed, "Oh, bother!" Mrs. King called out, "Do be careful, Calla!" and Calla, without dreaming of returning to mend the torn garments, ran downstairs like a whirlwind. Not that she was in any hurry; but she habitually ran downstairs at full speed. At the front parlour door she knocked, and being invited to enter, went in and closed that door with unusual quiet.

The invalid, Miss Howard, had the flowers she had bought arranged on the table at her elbow, and was still enjoying their fragrance. She greeted her young visitor kindly; it was a dull, sad life she lived, poor woman! and Calla's bright presence in her quiet, close room was one of the few things she looked forward to which helped to while away the time. Calla admired the flowers duly, and bestowed on Miss Howard the requisite cheering and comfort by listening with exemplary patience to a long list of the poor lady's latest symptoms and sufferings.

"Now, my dear, tell me what you have been doing to-day. How is your auntie? and have you got any news to amuse me with?" inquired Miss Howard, when she had dwelt sufficiently on all her ills.

"Oh, I've been trying to make a hat three seasons old look new," replied the girl. "And there's no news—there never is any news—except that we have had letters from Mrs. Darrell and Isabel to-day. I've told you all about Mrs. Darrell and Isabel, haven't I?"

"Mrs. Darrell is the widow lady who came from Australia, and married your mother's cousin; and who lives in France with her

husband and her daughter by her first marriage. And Isabel Grey is the daughter, the fair girl whose portrait you have in your album, is she not?" said Miss Howard, who, like most people who lead a lonely, colourless, and joyless life, had a tenacious memory for gossip about people who were total strangers to her.

"Yes, that's it. Well," pursued Calla, narratively, "you know she had two children, a son and a daughter; only long before she married Mr. Darrell, Felix had gone back to Australia. He is much older than Isabel, of course; he has been for the last eight years in America and Canada—indeed, he seems to have been all over the world. And now he has come back to his mother: he hasn't seen her, or been in Europe at all this time! Just fancy! He came from Quebec, and he has been staying at La Basse-Rive some time; and now he has come to London, and he's going to call and see us soon."

"Well, my dear, that is a piece of news! And how old is Mr. Felix Grey? You have never seen him, of course?"

"No, of course not. I never saw his mother until she married Mr. Darrell seven or eight years ago, you know; and then Felix had been away ever so long. I must have been quite a child when he went back to Australia."

"You are not much more than a child still," said Miss Howard kindly, but half compassionately, as suffering middle age is apt to look on youth.

"I am nearly sixteen. A great many girls are married at sixteen."

"Not a great many, I hope, my dear. I think those early marriages are very rash experiments."

"Why rash?"

"Because a girl marrying so young loses all her girlhood, springs at once from childhood to a woman's work and a woman's duties. Besides, at that age, it is scarcely possible she can really know her own mind."

"That's what people say so often," responded Calla, "but it always seems to me that one's own mind must be the very easiest thing in all the world to know at any age. Not that *I* want to be married at sixteen; for my part, *I* never can see why people want to get married and bother about housekeeping at all. *My* plan, if I ever had any money, would be to live single, and have a set of rooms in a large hotel."

"I hope you will never carry out that plan, my dear child," said Miss Howard, with a slightly shocked air. "You will contract a happy union in the course of time, I hope, for your own sake. It is sad for a woman to be alone," she added, with a repressed sigh.

Calla's bright, half defiant smile faded. She noticed the sigh, and the sad look on the poor pain-worn face, and felt sympathetic,

but only looked a little awkward and embarrassed. She was not timid nor reserved as a rule, but an occasional shyness had often held her back from expressing her feelings, and made her look cold and unsympathetic.

"Still," continued Miss Howard, "it is, of course, far better to be alone than with any-one but the right person."

"But there must be a great many right persons in the world for each of us," remarked Calla.

"How do you mean, my dear?" asked Miss Howard, rather alarmed lest the girl should be about to advocate a plurality of husbands.

"Why, there are so many kinds of tempers and characters that one could get along with very well," replied Calla philosophically. "I could get along with any man who didn't want to keep me too much in order, no matter what kind of a temper he had. I am not so particular as some girls," she added, with a grandly impartial air. "I should not care a bit whether he was dark or fair. Of course I should like to have something of a choice; but then it isn't many girls of my sort who have that luck, I'm afraid. What I should like now would be to have three or four men to pick and choose from—or say half-a-dozen, to study them, and see which one had the best balanced character, and the nicest temper, and the clearest and finest intellect; and the most money, too, of course," she finished, her eyes being evidently fixed steadily on the matter-of-fact, and totally ignoring the sentimental.

Miss Howard smiled.

"You may well laugh at my talking about 'choice,'" said Calla, joining frankly in what she deemed to be the joke against herself. "But, I only said I should *like* it. I know, as I said, that of course I'll have no such luck."

But it was not the vanity at which Miss Howard smiled. She was smiling half sadly at the utter omission of love from Calla's matrimonial plans.

Of love, properly so called, Calla indeed had not a thought. Her nature was not ripe for the comprehension of it; it had no place in her dreams. She read of it in novels and poetry, and liked it there; there it seemed to her in its place. But in her crude and undeveloped ideal of life, love had, at this time, no part at all.

She was, as yet, rather thoughtful than sentimental, of a mind more receptive and fuller of keen perceptions than those persons who only noticed her lively, careless manner, and did not observe the expression of her dark hazel eyes, would have given her credit for. She had lived through a fair share of experience in her sixteen years—first, the pleasant experience of a pretty country home, happy in spite of many pecuniary troubles, of which Calla was then too young to be conscious; next, the painful experiences of the

breaking-up of that home, of privations, of debt, of difficulty; then of death, and of a parting following that, which seemed scarcely less than another death.

The death was that of her mother; the parting was with her father, who, three months after his wife's death, went off to America to try his fortunes there, leaving little Calla, then about eleven years old, in the care of her two aunts, her mother's sisters. With her maiden Aunt Alice in the country, and her widowed Aunt Sarah in London, Calla lived alternately until her Aunt Alice, marrying late in life, went off to live in the north of Scotland, when Calla fell entirely into Sarah King's charge. She had no living relative on her father's side, and only one other on her mother's, the Mr. Darrell, of whom mention has already been made. He was the first cousin of the deceased Mrs. Yorke, and he and his wife, and his step-daughter, although they lived in France, and their visits to London were few and far between, were the nearest and dearest friends Calla possessed, and those rare visits of theirs were seasons marked with a white stone to her.

Thus, although he was no blood relation of theirs, both Mrs. King and Calla looked forward with almost as much pleasure as though he had been of their own kindred, to seeing Mrs. Darrell's son, Felix Grey. Besides their natural wish to make the acquaintance of any member of that family, a visitor was an event to Calla and her aunt. They had few friends and little money, and consequently went into no society.

Mrs. King wrote pretty novelettes with unexceptional morals, and short stories for children's magazines, which she generally got published and paid for, and these payments, small as they were, went far towards being the main support of herself and niece, for Mrs. King's private means were represented by a very low figure; they were barely sufficient to supply the pair with bread, and the contributions of Calla's father to the funds were irregular, and came generally as surprises more or less pleasant, according to the figures on the cheque.

The life which Calla Yorke led was thus a quiet and eventless one, but she never found it dreary, never sighed at its dulness, nor tired of its monotony. In her exuberant health and joyous youth mere life was a pleasure to her. She revelled in the summer sun and rejoiced in the clear winter frosts; she lived so intensely in the present, that the slightest passing incident caught her fancy and occupied her imagination, and of course she was deeply interested in the prospective visit of Felix Grey.

Mrs. Smith was duly "spoken to" about the vacant drawing-room, and humbly petitioned to allow Mrs. King to receive visitors there. In a gracious mood Mrs. Smith consented, and even bestowed the additional favour of an "ornament for the fire-stove," and a few

books upon the table to make it look more home-like. She disclaimed thanks, saying she liked to do things for the credit of the house.

Unluckily for the credit of the house, according to Mrs. Smith's ideas, Mrs. Smith was not to the fore when Mr. Grey appeared upon the scene, and Polly, unaware or forgetful of the arrangement that had been made, marshalled him past the door of the state apartment that had been prepared to receive him, up to the second floor. From the second-floor landing, a window led out on to what Calla called "her balcony," but which other members of the household more simply, if less euphoniously, styled "the leads." As a substitute for a balcony, it possessed the recommendation of being the nearest approach to that luxury which the house afforded, save in the sacred "drawing-rooms." More than this could scarcely be said for it, except by Calla, who maintained that she had a "view" from it. She could see three trees and an almost unlimited expanse of back-yards.

On this favourite spot Calla was wont to sit and read in summer; and there she was sitting, or rather lounging, curled up on the dusty leads—her elbow on the low parapet which ran around them, a great folio Shakespeare, very much the worse for wear, on her lap, the sharp sunlight throwing into pitiless prominence the worn places and dusty streaks on her old brown frock, and the untidy, rebellious locks of hair that had broken free from the restraints of a few straggling hair-pins—when Mr. Grey, escorted by Polly, ascended the stairs.

"Please, Miss Calla, here's a gentleman!"

Polly jerked these words abruptly at Calla, and drew back, evidently deeming her duty done. Calla dropped her book into the dust, and looked too startled and dismayed to rise.

"Who is it?" she asked; and as she put the question, the visitor whose advent had been so unceremoniously announced, stood at the window and looked down on her, as she stared open-eyed at him.

Then he stooped his head—he had to bend it somewhat low to get through the open window—and stepped out on the leads to her, and said,

"Miss Calla, must I introduce myself?"

She jumped up, blushing vividly, and letting her book lie where it had fallen.

"You can't be anybody else but Felix—Mr. Grey?" she said, correcting her first familiarity. She looked at him half gladly, half disappointedly, glad to see and to know the traveller who had travelled so far, the wanderer who had returned home at last, yet disappointed to find him so far from "all that fancy had painted him." She had imagined him quite as a hero of romance; in her mind's eye he had been a picturesque Adonis of imposing aspect,

And lo! here was a rather plain and decidedly unpicturesque young man in a light coat, with a figure as far from resembling the Dying Gladiator as his features were from the Apollo Belvidere.

However, he had a very pleasant smile, and he shook hands with her as if they had been friends a dozen years.

"You *are* yourself, I suppose, and not anybody else? We are not both making a mistake, are we?" she said merrily, as she cast a second glance of inspection and criticism upon his face.

"I am myself, I believe. I have always been under the impression at least, that I was the real and original Felix Grey. I never heard any one else lay claim to that distinction. It's evident you don't think I resemble my family much?"

He smiled as if he read her thoughts, and she reddened guiltily, conscious that those thoughts were, how very much better looking his family were than he; but as he smiled, the resemblance struck her suddenly, and she recognized his sister's expression, his mother's eyes.

"Now I am much more trustful than you," he continued. "I take it for granted at once and for all that you are Miss Calla Yorke."

"Ah! you heard Polly call me," said Calla practically. "And now you must not stay out here; it is not where we receive visitors generally."

"Is not it? Why not?" he responded, laughingly. "It's open and airy. And it's your place for reading, I see," he added, stooping to pick up the fallen Shakespeare.

"Yes, I like it; I hate sitting in rooms in summer."

"What a capital traveller you would make!"

"Come, you must travel down to the drawing-room now," she said briskly. "And give me my book. If you hadn't startled me I shouldn't have dropped poor 'Timon of Athens' into the dust."

"'Timon of Athens!' What a choice for *you*!" he observed looking with a half-surprised, half-amused glance at her young and almost childish face.

"Why for *me*? I'm very fond of it. That's the way!" she added in her usual bright, decisive manner, as she looked alternately up and down the stairs. "Down to the drawing-room; the front door. I'll fetch auntie."

The drawing-room did not look very home-like; it had a cold and uninhabited appearance, in spite of the beautiful pink and silver ornament for the stove, and Mrs. Smith's contributions of a Bible, a dictionary, and a keepsake for 1830 towards the furniture of the centre table.

Mr. Grey had time to glance into each volume of this selection of literature, and to discover that there was no ink in the inkstand, and that the clock on the mantel-piece did not go, before Calla re-

turned with Mrs. King, the latter in her best black dress, Calla with her wandering locks of hair put up, and sundry finishing touches added to her attire, certainly not before they were needed, but wasted on Felix Grey, who had no eyes for feminine toilette.

He responded warmly to Mrs. King's cordial welcome; and the ice of the first meeting, which usually thaws slowly to its dissolution, in this instance broke up at once. From the moment Felix Grey spoke and smiled, he was no longer a stranger, but a friend. Calla's momentary disappointment in his appearance had quickly passed; and she and her aunt alike regarded him with approving eyes.

It certainly was not any personal beauty that attracted them in him. His best friends could not, by any stretch of imagination, have called him handsome. His face was too long and too thin; his figure also too spare and angular for his height; his mouth was partly hidden by a heavy moustache, of the same light reddish brown as his hair, which did not seem to have a wave or a curl in it. There was nothing at all remarkable about the darker brown eyes except their thoughtful kindliness of expression, though they were undeniably his best feature. There was nothing beautiful or regular about the whole face; and yet when it smiled it was attractive--wonderfully so, considering how little of conventional attractions it could boast.

One of the first things noticeable about him was an indescribable "thoroughbred" air. It was certainly not in his manner or language, which were frank and easy, and in no way *distingué*; yet it was somehow perceptible in his every look and word. If you had seen Felix Grey in fustian rags, with his long thin fingers dark and coarse with manual work, after a very few moments the idea would surely have occurred to you, "This man must have been born a gentleman!" His voice was clear and low, his accent a trifle strange to London ears, but very gentle and deliberate. Yet it was not to his low voice or long and shapely hands that you could attribute his air of gentle birth and breeding; it clung about him undefinably but unmistakably.

"Are you glad to get back to England?" asked Calla, in her usual full and animated tones.

"Yes; I feel that I've come *home*. That's odd enough, for I only came to England when I was eleven, and left it when I was fourteen. Yet when I touched English ground I threw up my cap, and said, 'Here I am in my native land again! - the native land I'd only known for three years of boyhood,'" he added, smiling.

"But the land of your parents, the land you must have been brought up to consider your own!" said Mrs. King.

"Yes, that's just it. All my life England has been 'Home' in my mind. No colonist ever talks of 'going over to England.' It's

always 'going home.' It is quite a surprise to me that my mother chooses to live in France."

"I suppose it is her choice as well as Mr. Darrell's?"

"Quite as much. She likes it. By-the-bye, I hope we are to have the pleasure of seeing you at La Basse-Rive this summer?"

"Mrs. Darrell has very kindly invited us, but I fear we shall not be able to manage the visit this season."

"No, no such luck, I'm afraid," said Calla regretfully.

"You would like to come?" he inquired.

"Yes," emphatically.

"Well, then, of course you must come," confidently.

"It would be a new and unrecognizable world if we did as we liked, wouldn't it?" observed Mrs. King. "I do not like working as hard as I do, but I have to do it."

"And I help auntie as much as I can. I copy for her, and help to correct the proofs," said Calla.

"It is literature that takes up your time? That's half the errand I've come to London upon," he rejoined. "You must know that amongst the manifold posts I have filled in my life, I have been a little of everything—"

"Soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor,
'Potheary, ploughboy, thief!"

quoted Miss Calla, saucily putting in *her* word.

"Very nearly all that," he assented. "My enemies would tell you perhaps even a little of the last, I dare say. But amongst these various professions I edited a paper once, and naturally took to scribbling, so I'm come publisher-hunting. I've got some introductions. I suppose *you* have plenty of literary friends?"

"Very few. You see we are living very quietly, in rooms not suitable for mixing in society," began Mrs. King.

"No, that I don't see. I consider this a first-rate reception-room," he said, glancing around it.

"It is—the fact is," replied Mrs. King, hesitating, and casting an involuntarily inquiring look towards Calla. It was odd that the aunt, cultivated, strong and thoughtful woman as she was, often appealed to and accepted her young niece's decision.

"This is not our room. We only borrow it to receive 'distinguished visitors' in. We are on the floor above this, and these rooms are to let," said Calla quite frankly and confidently, without any blush or discomfiture.

"To let, are they, these rooms? Back and front room, I suppose?" he rejoined somewhat eagerly: adding, "Ah! but then if you are in the habit of using this as your visitors' room, of course it would be inconvenient to you if they were occupied."

"Not at all. They are sure to be occupied soon. It is the

merest chance that they happen to be empty, and we happen to have borrowed this room to-day."

"And distinguished visitors don't often trouble us," laughed Calla. "We receive about six female friends; but wolves don't prowl around this fold much."

"Am I a wolf, then?" asked Mr. Grey, looking half puzzled, half amused.

"At school my dear old governess used to give me to understand that all men were wolves. I have laid that lesson to heart you see, whatever else I forgot. I was only one quarter at school," added Calla, which last piece of information was not only irrelevant, but entirely unnecessary, inasmuch as it was impossible to be ten minutes in Calla Yorke's company without perceiving that she was no school-bred girl. No girl bred at school, no girl brought up amongst a mass of other girls, had ever that air of freedom and openness that was not audacious, because it was so simple, that look and manner of innocence that yet just escaped ignorance and *gaucherie* because it was so childlike.

"If these rooms are to be let, would a wolf taking them be deemed to endanger the safety of the fold?" inquired Mr. Grey.

"Not at all; we have two tame wolves upstairs."

"Then might I take these rooms?" he asked sincerely and anxiously inquiring, as if for an absolutely necessary permission from an autocrat.

"My dear Mr. Grey, that would be your affair and the landlady's! We should, of course, be very glad to have you for a neighbour, if these apartments really suited you," replied Mrs. King, smiling very pleasantly.

"It would be very nice for you to be here; then we should know everybody in the house," said Calla gladly.

"Who are they that live in the house?"

"Up at the top, Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Treves; warranted harmless wolves both. On the second-floor three lambs—myself and auntie in the front, and Miss Roberts, a dressmaker, in the back. In the parlour an invalid lady, Miss Howard," replied Calla, going straight through the list, as if she had been reading an inventory aloud. "The inhabitants of the drawing-rooms are considered the aristocrats of the house. The last set—they went last week—were very patrician and very disagreeable. You would be a decided improvement on them."

"Thank you," he replied. "Let us hope you will continue in the same mind on our further acquaintance."

"He'll take the rooms! I'm sure he will!" Calla exclaimed, when Felix Grey had departed, dancing joyfully, as she spoke, round the apartment—their own legitimate apartment, to which they had returned. "He is nice, auntie, isn't he? Not a beauty, though.

Not so good-looking as Mrs. Darrell's son ought to be, is he? It will be nice to have Isabel's brother in the house with us, won't it? He's much darker than Isabel, isn't he?"

"Yes, to all the string of questions. I think I shall like him, Calla. It's evident *you* do already."

"How could I help liking Mrs. Darrell's son? and when he is going to take the drawing-room floor, too!" exclaimed Calla, as if this last were indeed a rare and crowning attraction. "Now I am going to announce the joyful news to Miss Howard. *Any* news is good news in this establishment, because there so seldom is any! And every bit of news there is I am always the first to purvey! I think the inmates ought to subscribe to me as a kind of local gazette!" she added gaily, as she flashed out of the room at her usual express speed.

Mrs. King smiled affectionately after the girl, and thought to herself that they might better subscribe to her as the brightest bit of sunshine in the house.

CHAPTER II.

"A ROSE WITH ALL ITS SWEETEST LEAVES YET FOLDED."

FELIX GREY did fulfil Calla's anticipation, and crown and complete his own attraction for her, by taking "the drawing-room floor." The very day after his first visit he moved in, bag and baggage, the baggage, save by one portmanteau, being scantily represented, but the name of the bags being legion.

The house was certainly the pleasanter for his presence. He did not remain three days a stranger to any one in it; he made acquaintance with everybody by the simple means of greeting in a friendly "hail-fellow-well-met" way every member of the establishment he encountered on the stairs. He made Mrs. King take him down to the parlour and introduce him to the invalid lady, Miss Howard, on one of the latter's "best days," and entertained her for an hour with accounts of other lands and descriptions of his travels.

He picked up a superficial kind of intimacy with Mr. Treves, and found him in daily, or rather nightly, cigars. Mrs. Smith permitted smoking in her lodgers' rooms, although it was forbidden on the stairs; but Mr. Grey soon became a privileged person, who was tacitly licensed to light or to retain alight his cigar without the prescribed limits.

He seemed to entertain a serious objection to partaking of any meal, save breakfast, alone, to judge by the frequency of his invita-

tions to Mrs. King and Calla, to come down to tea and muffins, or dinner, if he dined at home, which, however, was but seldom. Many were the little notes of invitations that Polly, holding carefully in her apron to preserve them from coming into blackening contact with her finger and thumb, conveyed from the first up to the second floor. Mrs. King scrupled at accepting these hospitalities at first, but it was very difficult to refuse anything to Felix Grey.

"I never recognized the inconvenience of being a bachelor before!" he said. "Won't you try to imagine that I've got a wife somewhere over the water? If you'd suppose that, it would make it all square, wouldn't it? But come, Mrs. King, that's not necessary; why, we are relations, you know; we are almost cousins according to my code. Don't put me to the pain of having to rush out and get married to somebody by special license before you'll come to tea!"

So to partake of the harmless dissipation of tea and muffins, they frequently went down into the wolf's den, as Calla now christened the drawing-room; and even these mild festivities formed a pleasing variation in the monotony of daily life. A little society and conversation beyond that of her landlady and fellow-lodgers, a little breath of new life from other worlds, was as pleasant to Mrs. King as to her niece, who from the first was eager to accept the tea-and-toast invitations. Perhaps Calla's wishes might have carried the day even if there had been an opposition, instead of union, of inclinations in the case. For Calla was her aunt's pet weakness, and must have all the innocent amusements that could be given to her.

Mrs. King's method in bringing up Calla had been a conflict between principle and impulse, between "a little hoard of maxims," as to the education of the young, and a warm and almost maternal affection for this child who was all the responsibility and all the sunshine of her life, and whose spirits she could not bear to check. Consequently Calla could not be said to have been brought up on any system at all; she grew up naturally as a flower, unpruned and untrained, all wild spirits and warm heart and glowing health. Mrs. King's main idea was that girls ought not to be spoiled by habits of self-consciousness and self-study, and on this point Calla proved an eminently satisfactory charge, though her disregard of her own personality was less owing to modesty than to thoughtlessness.

"The strange thing was that, beauteous, she was wholly
Unconscious, albeit turned of quick sixteen;
That she was fair, or dark, or short, or tall,
She never thought about herself at all."

She took Felix Grey into her full confidence and fraternal friendship immediately, and declared to her aunt her liking for him with

a *naïveté* that utterly ignored the fact that he was a young man, and she a girl—a fact which he also appeared to ignore almost as completely as she.

He had plenty of introductions in London, but there were only a few of which he chose to avail himself. He picked up several male friends, old and new, most of whom came and called upon him in Clarence Street. Two of them speculated as they walked away together.

"Why doesn't he put up at an hotel? Seems tolerably flush—fellows fresh from America always are, or ought to be. Wonder why he stops in that dingy house with the grubby little 'Marchioness?'"

Probably, if they had seen one of his little tea-parties of three, they would have wondered less; but in that case they would have entirely misattributed the attraction the house had for him. He liked the society of his fellow-creatures, although for "society" properly so-called he cared not much, nor had hitherto been much accustomed to it. He hated formality; he liked freedom, he liked humanity, and there was plenty of humanity in the "dingy house" in Clarence Street, from the little "Marchioness," who always looked hungry and generally dirty, and yet somehow invariably cheerful, and the poor faded lady who had known better days, and could not forget the fact, although she had come down in the world to one shabby front parlour, up to the mild old gentleman who came and went quietly to and from his office, and led a negative sort of life, and was no trouble to any one; and down again to Calla with her bright free youth, glad and gay as a bird singing from pure lightness of heart, utterly careless of herself, and unconscious that she was as a ray of living sunshine sparkling about the dingy house. Felix liked studies of life and character; his habits were frugal; Mrs. Smith, for a wonder, could cook, and cook well, when she chose, and altogether his present abode suited his taste well, more especially on account of its contrast with the staid and stately private hotel where he had been staying before. He had not felt himself anything more than "Number 38" there, and he preferred being a man to being a number. He liked Calla and Mrs. King, too; but as to flirtation or romance, he never troubled his head or heart at all about anything of the sort. The life he had led was more conducive to performing friendships than loves. Falling in love was not his "line of business" at all; and besides, Calla was a child—a child in nature even more than in years—a child to whom the great world was unknown, and "society" merely a name.

"Well, Miss Calla, what were you doing in the house all this fine afternoon?" Felix inquired, as they finished their tea one day.

"Copying auntie's last chapter for her, while she was making

a new frock for me. Whenever either of us gets tired we take a turn at each other's occupation."

"To the relief and advantage of both parties. A sort of mutual liability company Calla and I form, you see."

"And a mutual blessing, I guess. I wonder how you would get on without each other?" he observed.

"We are in no great hurry to try the experiment—are we, Calla?"

"No, indeed. Auntie and I are never going to do without each other. Some day, when our ship comes home, and when she publishes a large illustrated book, I shall do the illustrations."

"Do you draw, then?"

"Whenever I have time and opportunity, I spoil paint and paper. But I try to do everything. I try to sing; I try to write; I try to paint, and I can't do any of them well."

"One would scarcely expect a finished artist, author, or musician at your age," he observed, smiling. "But which would you rather be?"

"An author," she responded promptly, "but auntie thinks I have more talent for drawing, and papa used to wish me to draw. I think when he comes back he will be pleased to find I have worked at my sketches."

"And what do you draw?"

"Calla's designs are on an ambitious scale," observed Mrs. King. "She was trying the great scene between Othello and Iago the other day, and her latest attempt is Cleopatra and her women drawing Antony up, wounded, into the monument."

"But I tore Othello and Iago up," Calla interposed. "I could not make Othello's *face* satisfactory; he looked just like one of those niggers with bones! and I can't manage the *monument* at all in Antony and Cleopatra, so next time I'm going to try the scene where the clown brings the asp and Iras falls down dead."

Felix could not repress a smile, not at her failures, but at her choice of subjects. They were, however, the natural choice in perfect keeping with that phase of her life. The imagination develops long before the heart, and in early youth the floating straws of fancy show the current of the temperament before yet a single cargo of feeling is launched and trusted to the tide.

"You must show me some of your sketches," he said.

"They're not worth showing to anybody," she replied very decisively. "If I don't get on better in my designs soon, I shall drop drawing and *really* try to write."

"But you must not think," he said, "that because you don't *yet* succeed in conveying your ideas either by pen or pencil that you are bound to be a failure. Mrs. King can tell you, I am sure, that it is not often that talent develops itself so early."

"Early! I am sixteen," she protested. "At what age did *your* talent begin to develop itself?" she added with real curiosity.

"My light was hidden under a bushel until I was considerably past sixteen," he acknowledged, smiling. "I suppose I had the scribbling instincts always; but the fit seized me suddenly at last, and though pens and papers were not too plentiful where I was then, I plunged down into the depths so deep, I might have double-papered the walls of my tent with my own compositions."

"And what sort of things do you write?"

"Well, I'll show you, if you would care to look over one of my MSS.?"

"Yes; *do* show me!" she said eagerly.

Felix opened a drawer, and rummaging among a confusion of papers, presently pulled out a bundle and handed it to Calla.

"It's all true, if that will make it any the more interesting," he observed.

"Am I to be shut out of your confidence? Can't you spare one for me to look at too?" asked Mrs. King.

Felix hesitated.

"Well, you see, Mrs. King," he said, with a sort of boyish embarrassment, "I am—a—kind of afraid of *you*!"

"But when you are going to challenge public criticism, why not challenge private opinion?"

"Because a private opinion alarms me much more. I'm accustomed to being pitched into in print; my seven years in the United States injured me to that. I have figured as a 'black-minded, prowling vagabond' before now."

"I would promise not to use any language *quite* so strong," Mrs. King said smiling, "however unfavourable my opinions were."

While they chatted, Calla had absorbed herself in Felix Grey's manuscript. She had plunged into the perusal heart and soul, as she did everything. There she sat, by the window, her elbow on the table, her head on her hand. She had let her hair free from its usual net that day, and only tied it back from her brow with a pink ribbon which, being bright and new, made her old, washed-out pink muslin dress look more faded still. But there was nothing faded or washed-out in the face that blossomed out of the faded dress. Pale, but with clear and healthy whiteness, with brilliant, earnest eyes, ripe cherry lips, and smooth, fair cheeks that contrived somehow to bloom without colour, there clung a halo of freshness, and brightness, and youth about her like the morning dew upon the half-open rose. The mild May evening sun streamed in and bathed the girlish figure in its light, gilding and reddening to the tint of warm autumn leaves the end of the loose tresses that waved over her shoulders, leaving the thicker masses of hair still dark as night.

Felix Grey looked at her approvingly, and not content with only

looking, observed *sotto voce* to Mrs. King, "That *furnishes* the room—lightens it up, doesn't it?" Of which frank compliment Mrs. King discreetly only took notice by a kind smile, and Calla, absorbed in her reading, no notice at all. Leaving her companions to talk or be silent, as they chose, she read steadily on to the end.

"Well, Miss Calla?" inquired the author, as she shut it up.

"What a nice clear hand you write!" was Calla's first remark, uttered with sincere approbation.

Felix fairly burst out laughing.

"I shall feel very much crushed if you have no other criticism to offer," he said, half amused, half curious to know what she did think of it.

Calla disregarded the challenge. In her heart she was delighted with the sketch—for "story" it could hardly be called—and thought the descriptions simply splendid; there was a vigour and originality and glow of colour about the whole style which took her by surprise, and threw the prettiness and gentle morality of Mrs. King's magazine stories—which supplied the staff of life to the aunt and niece, and which Calla was accustomed to copy proudly and sincerely admire—quite into shade. She looked at Felix Grey with a new interest in her eyes—she had not thought it was "in him;" but she always felt shy and awkward at praising people's work to their faces, particularly when specially appealed to. She calmly ignored the invitation to compliment or criticize, and only said—

"Is it really all true?"

"Nearly all. It's coloured up a bit. I put in the grey wolf, for instance, to heighten the picture."

"And was it really you that it happened to?"

"No, it was a friend of mine. But say, Miss Calla, did it interest you? Did it catch your attention?"

"Yes," she answered emphatically.

"Let me look at it," said Mrs. King, as Calla lingered over the S., and turned back a leaf or two.

"It's too bad of me to afflict my guests in this way," said Felix apologetically; "but I haven't caught a single victim since I landed in England, and I feel that I can't resist inflicting the ordeal on the first helpless ones that fall in my power. I've left a bundle with a publisher; but I don't count *him* as a victim, because ten to one he won't read them. Here, by-the-bye," he added, taking out of the cupboard a flask of Chartreuse and a plate of biseuits, "you must have something to restore you after the trial."

"Like the sugar-plum they used to give me after I'd been to the dentist's," suggested Calla.

"Calla, my dear child," remonstrated Mrs. King.

"That isn't a complimentary simile," said Felix, with pretended

gravity; but Calla caught the smile in his eyes, and laughed her gay, girlish laugh, which was a refreshing thing to hear, it was so hearty.

"I didn't mean it to be complimentary; but then I didn't mean it to be rude either," she said, in her simple way. "Now, auntie, *you* take it and read it," and she pushed the story over to her aunt.

The elder lady read the manuscript, and did not keep her opinion to herself as the girl had done. She expressed herself "quite charmed," and uttered a gentle but apposite criticism or two which added weight to her approbation. Yet possibly the author may have appreciated Calla's silence more. As they sat discussing literature, Chartreuse, and orange biscuits, a descending step—masculine—was audible on the staircase outside the door.

"There's Treves. I'd like just to ask him in. May I?" asked Felix, who always, when Mrs. King and Calla were his guests, treated them as the proprietresses of himself and all his belongings. With their sanction accordingly, he opened the door, and hailed their fellow-lodger with an invitation which he was by no means loth to accept.

Mr. Treves was a young man with sleek, blonde hair, and a baby moustache, a plump figure, and a good-looking, round, fresh-coloured face, only rather too cherubic and childlike for masculine beauty, who considered himself connected with Art, on the strength of the fact that he had occasionally turned an honest penny, and occupied his evening after office hours by doing illustrations on a cheap weekly paper, whose sub-editor held him in his good graces. He also cultivated a musical talent; and his next door neighbour was often, just at the hour of retiring to rest, afflicted by a doleful serenade on the concertina, which convenient and portable instrument Mr. Treves deemed eminently suitable for an accompaniment to his own singing of "Dormez, dormez, ma belle," and "Kathleen Mavourneen," that much-in-demand young lady, who is always being summoned to wake from her slumbers at such untimely hours. Treves was not a bad young fellow, and he pleased Calla by always treating her as a grown-up young lady.

"How would it be to send a glass of this down to Miss Howard?" suggested Felix, while Treves, with the air of a connoisseur, held his liqueur glass of Chartreuse up to the light.

"Oh! she would be so pleased, I'm sure. Shall I take it to her?" responded Calla, catching gladly at the idea.

"Well, since you're so kind as to offer, Miss Calla, I would trouble you to carry it down. Our poor little friend Polly always looks half-starved; and I'm afraid if we employed her, Miss Howard might get it diluted."

So Calla tripped downstairs with a small tray containing—visibly a glass of Chartreuse and a plate of biscuits, and invisibly Mr.

Grey's compliments and respects. Miss Howard was pleased, kept Calla with her while she sipped and tasted, and related to her with a sigh how "in her poor papa's life-time they had choice liqueurs every day regularly, in antique Venetian glasses." When Calla's flying feet bore her upstairs to the drawing-room again—for now, unhampered by fears of spilling her charge, she flew, as usual—she carried with her two letters, having encountered the postman at the door.

One letter bore a French postmark, and was addressed to Felix Grey, the other was from America, and was from Calla's father, though addressed to her aunt, his sister-in-law, for he wrote alternately to one and the other.

"From papa!" cried Calla, breathlessly, as she thrust it into Mrs. King's hand. "Read it quick, auntie."

"You will excuse my opening it," observed Mrs. King, and having received everybody's instant sanction, hesitated still. She had learnt the lesson that years and experience so invariably teach—of timidity in opening letters from far off. Ill news are so sure to reach us, good tidings we are so often left to guess. But Calla knew no fears nor misgivings, and was only impatient and glad. Her instinct was the truest: for not only was the letter a cheerful one, setting forth the writer's improving prospects—(he said he was going to make his fortune, only he had said the same for five years past)—but it inclosed a cheque for two hundred dollars on an Anglo-American bank. Mrs. King smiled as her eyes fell upon it; Calla's face, as she read the letter eagerly over her aunt's shoulder, became fairly illuminated with delight and interest.

"Pon my word, Miss Yorke, I'd be very glad if I thought any one I ever wrote to would receive my letters with such joy," observed Treves, a little sentimentally.

"I dare say plenty would, if you'd send such nice inclosures," replied Calla carelessly, without looking up from the page.

"Don't imply that you value the inclosure more than the letter, Calla, dear," Mrs. King observed half reproachfully.

The girl coloured so vividly, and her bright face clouded so suddenly at this slight reproof, that Felix, looking at her, neglected to attend to his own correspondence.

"Well, it's all good news, I hope, Mrs. King?" he said, presently; and being assured that it was, proceeded to quote from his own letter. "My mother and Isabel desire their love to you, and trust you will both be able to pay them a visit very soon. Your rooms will be ready next week; my mother will write to you; and, as I shall soon be going over, I can escort you. I do hope that you will be able to come!"

"I think perhaps we may," replied Mrs. King slowly but hopefully, hastily running over a mental calculation as to how far two

hundred dollars would go, and how many "little bills" there were to be paid. "You would like it, Calla?"

"More than anything in the world!"

"You are a fortunate young lady to be so easily contented," observed Mr. Treves.

"Easily contented! To go over to France, to go abroad for the first time in my life, to stay with Mrs. Darrell and Isabel, to see a bit of new, strange life—is that to be *easily* contented? Why, *what* could you want more?" demanded Calla emphatically,

"I might aspire to some things even more, I'm afraid," he responded, with a Byronic smile, which sat rather incongruously on this blonde, plump, flaxen-moustached face.

It was soon a settled thing that Mrs. King and Calla were to pay their long-talked of visit to Mr. and Mrs. Darrell the following week, making the not very formidable journey under the escort of Felix Grey.

On the evening before their departure, Felix invited his "friends and fellow-lodgers" to partake of a little supper in his room.

So old Mr. Fletcher, persuaded down from his third-floor front, made his appearance in Mr. Grey's room for the first time; and Mr. Treves, with a rose in his button-hole, descended the stairs punctually at the hour he was invited; and Mrs. King and Calla came later, not from any intent to be fashionable, but only because, as the hour struck, they were busy finishing a flounce on a travelling-dress for the morrow, which they sat close together "eating up" between them. And Miss Howard managed to make her way upstairs, leaning on the landlady's arm, and was wrapped in a shawl, and placed in the easiest armchair.

And then, as supper was being laid, and Polly, with a clean face, in a new apron and cap, and a high state of excitement, brought in the first pile of plates, Felix Grey looked round the room and inquired,

"Where's Miss Roberts? At home?"

"Yes; she's upstairs at her sewing, as usual."

Felix glanced from Mrs. Smith to Polly, rather hesitatingly, as if debating in his choice of a messenger. Calla came to his side, and smiled comprehendingly and approvingly.

"I'll run up," she said nodding.

"Miss Calla, you're a brick!" said Felix, with honest pleasure.

"I'd go myself, only I'm afraid of treading on the proprieties. Ask her if she can spare time just to come down and have a glass of wine with us, just to drink us a pleasant journey to-morrow. I don't like any of the household to be absent to-night."

Miss Howard glanced at Mrs. King; Mrs. King smiled, but not at all satirically nor disapprovingly. Felix either intercepted the glance, or knew it instinctively.

"You ladies don't mind my gathering all the household together just to-night?" he said, in his frank respectful way—the "winning way," that had never failed to please a woman yet.

"Oh, no, not at all, Mr. Grey; it would ill become us who are enjoying your hospitality to seek to limit it," said Miss Howard kindly, but showing that she rather admired her own generosity in not desiring to shut the poor little dressmaker out of the enjoyment. For the laws of the caste were not much relaxed in this establishment, and the parlour had very little to do with the second-floor back. It was very much of a world in miniature after all.

In a few minutes Calla returned with Fanny Roberts, who pleaded in vain "not fit to appear in company."

"Dress! what does dress matter? Just look at *my* dress!" Calla had said; and truly as far as make and material went, Calla's attire had only very slightly the advantage.

The pale, little dressmaker blushed, and tried not to look uncomfortable as she took her seat at the table; it was the first time she had been admitted as a guest into the sacred precincts of the drawing-rooms; but she soon became at ease. She did drop her h's certainly; but she was a good, honest, modest little girl; there was nothing coarse or vulgar about her, although she caused Miss Howard much distress of mind by expressing her choice of a "slice of 'am," and admitting that she had "had an 'cadache that day."

Mr. Treves politely divided his attentions between her and Calla. The landlady and Miss Howard made mutual confidences about their respective ailments, until it appeared a wonder that under such sufferings they could live at all.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;" and around the same supper-table, partaking of the same pigeon-pie and drinking the same sherry, the whole miniature world of No. 21, Clarence Street fraternized. The host waxed hilarious under the influence of this success, and leant his elbow on the table and related an anecdote about a bear; and Calla and Miss Roberts, the natural affinity between girls asserting itself in spite of differences of degree, exchanged sympathetic glances of interest as the story reached its most thrilling point.

Anecdote is an easy and convenient ground for mixed parties to meet upon: a subject of discussion congenial to them all would have been decidedly difficult to select; but on the field of anecdote one and all, narrator and listeners, found themselves at home. Felix's bear story having led the way, Mrs. King followed with an adventure among brigands in Italy, which suggested to the landlady the history of a remarkable burglary, and to Mr. Fletcher a curious case in which his firm had been engaged some forty years ago. Even Fanny Roberts contributed her mite in the shape of an autobiographical account of her escape from a railway accident.

The field of anecdote had probably not been half exhausted when they moved on to the orthodox "fresh woods and pastures new" of toasts and song.

Mr. Treves begged to propose the health of their host, and some of the guests added a sentiment to the toast, Mrs. Smith observing, "Never was there a gentleman in these here drawing-rooms as made himself more pop'lar, and all I say is, may we see him back again."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Treves, while Mrs. Smith finished her glass of sherry, and looked as if she was about to drop a tear into it, in her regret at Mr. Grey's impending departure.

Then Felix called for a song, and old Mr. Fletcher said, with a little sigh, that he had been considered to take a very good part in glee-singing once, but his singing days were over. It appeared that most of the other guests' singing days were over too, with the exceptions of Calla, who never practiced her voice, and of Fanny Roberts, who had "no voice" to practice. But Mr. Treves, on being asked to favour them, hastened, nothing loth, to fetch his concertina down.

"It's a nice little instrument, isn't it?" he observed, regarding it affectionately, as he took it out of its case, and drew from it a dismal moan by way of prelude. He accompanied himself, and sang "The White Squall" with much tragic animation, and "Far from the old folks at home" with a pathos that Mrs. Smith declared "a'most brought the tears into one's eyes, if one had a feelin' heart." They then all sang "Auld Lang Syne" in chorus, that being proposed as appropriate to the occasion, although Felix Grey had nothing whatever to do with any of their early memories; he had never "paddled in the burn, and pu'd the gowans fine" with any of them, and the seas that were to "roar between them" on the morrow rolled no wider than the English Channel. Still they evidently enjoyed announcing melodiously that they "would take a cup of kindness yet," and they took it. And then they all parted, feeling that in spite of the odd jumbling together of different classes and characters—in defiance of the most elementary laws of caste, the "hodgepodge" served up that evening in Mr. Grey's supper-room had been a successful experiment.

Notwithstanding this conclusion, I don't "advise everybody to try it."

CHAPTER III.

"YET WHAT BINDS US, FRIEND TO FRIEND?"

CALLA YORKE will never forget to the last day of her life her first journey to France. Not that in these days of travelling it is anything but the most common-place and every-day journey to half

the world, but to her then there was no moment in it of common-place every-day life. It was her first going abroad, her first visit to the friends she best loved in their own home, and every little incident connected with it—the jolting drive in the dingy dog-kennel on wheels which Londoners appear contented to accept as a cab, the hive of porters swarming around the arriving vehicles at the station, the brisk rattle of the baggage-trucks along the platform—all was to her as fresh and pleasing an excitement as if she had never set her foot before in one of the great busy centres of our nineteenth century travelling.

It was evening when they started, too, and the brilliantly-lighted station, the bustle and stir under the gas-lamps, and the darkness beyond, into which they were whirled away, leaving the glare of the gas behind, as they tore along under the quiet stars, seemed to add a spice of romance to her enjoyment. Her face literally beamed with happy smiles as she sat watching the shadowy landscape race by. "Oh! how beautiful!" she whispered to herself sometimes, seeing strange beauty, unseen to other eyes, in the yellow glimmer of distant town or village, in the dim star-lit fields, in the dark clumps of trees, looking in the mysterious shades like great black strange animals sleeping on the plains of obscurely-outlined landscape darkening away to the horizon.

And when they reached their destination, and she saw the chimneys of steamboats cutting tall lines up across the dark blue sky, smelt the sharp salt sea air, found herself being swept along in a stream of fellow-travellers, and heard the snorting of the engines getting up steam, and people shouting, "This way for the boat! Which boat, sir? - which boat, ma'am? All right, this way!" her heart almost stood still with excitement and pleasure.

All this was such a common thing to Felix Grey; a voyage to the other hemisphere would have been only as an every-day event to him; travelling was indeed as his naturalelement. It had been a tolerably common every-season excitement to Mrs. King, too, once upon a time, in her days of prosperity. But to Calla all was pure novelty and delight. She was a child, and was in a child's bright dreamland.

"Am I awake, auntie - *am* I awake?" she said, as they stood on the deck, and heard the water plashing against the sides as the vessel slowly swung from the pier and steamed away.

"Do you like it, Miss Calla?" asked Felix, with a sort of wondering softness. There was something attractive, and yet pathetic, and above all surprising, to him about the exuberant happiness that illuminated the girl's face, and trembled in her voice.

"It's like a dream!" she replied. "Oh! look at the lights—look at the sky! Drink in the sea air! I feel as if I couldn't have enough of it!"

"I am afraid, my dear, you'll have more than enough of it before long," said Mrs. King; "it seems the wind is getting up."

The wind *was* getting up, and so, when they got into open sea, were the waves, and before three hours were over Calla was not quite so happy.

But when the next morning's sun had risen, and was full and bright in the blue sky—when the waves had calmed down, and the breakfast-bell was ringing in the saloon cabin, then Calla was in her glory again, perched up on one of the paddle-boxes, rolled mummy-like in a shawl, and her hat tied on comfortably but unbecomingly with a pocket-handkerchief. She was eating a very hard biscuit, and protesting, in answer to Felix's suggestion about "breakfast," that a biscuit in the fresh air was a better breakfast than all the ham, and eggs, and coffee the world could offer, if they must be partaken of in that—she paused for a word sufficiently strong, and wound up with much emphasis, "that dreadful dog-kennel downstairs!"

"*This* dog slept all night in his kennel very comfortably," said Felix, laughing and tapping his own breast.

"Then you could sleep in a frying-pan or a dust-hole," replied Calla, with a shudder.

The coast of France nearing into clearer view gave her apparently little less delight than the cry of "Land!" gave Columbus, and the scrambling up the narrow gangway to the quay, the cocked hats of the custom-house officers, and the shrill clamour of the foreign tongue, filled her with childish glee.

But by the time they arrived at the Château de la Basse-Rive, Calla, being unaccustomed to this kind of fatigue, and having been strung to a high pitch of excitement during all this her first experience of land and sea travelling, was very tired, and heartily glad when, with the clanging of a great bell and rolling back of big gates, they drove into the courtyard of the Château.

Then Mrs. Darrell and Isabel Grey appeared hospitably on the threshold to welcome them; then came white-capped and aproned maids and blue-bloused men to take bags and boxes, and then Calla found herself sitting on a straight-backed, stiff-armed velvet couch, with a glass of wine in one hand and a sandwich in the other, Mrs. King beside her similarly provided for, Mrs. Darrell hospitably presiding at the tray of light refreshment, and Isabel taking their bonnets and mantles, and observing that she must run and see that the right boxes were taken to the right apartments, as Fanchette would certainly deposit Felix's portmanteau in the ladies' room, and their trunk in his.

Mrs. Darrell was genuinely glad to receive her visitors, and welcomed them most hospitably, though without any excitement or flurry. She was always calm and gentle, seldom

manifesting any enthusiasm, and still seldomer any astonishment, at anything. She was a beautiful, stately, slightly-built woman, with the hall-mark of birth and breeding on every feature and gesture. That face, and figure, and air of hers would have sent her to the guillotine in the Reign of Terror, saying as clearly as they did "aristocrat." Hers was a pale, careworn face, thoughtful and sadly sweet, yet proud and reserved; in expression, delicate and patrician in every outline, almost as lovely now that the soft brown hair was streaked with grey as it could have been in her youth. Only those silver threads told her age; her complexion was still clear, and pure, and beautiful in its spotless paleness. Isabel Grey bore a great resemblance to her mother, but was much fairer; her hair was a pale golden blonde, and her eyes of a light and changeful grey, whereas Mrs. Darrell's were of a deep, beautiful brown. Felix had his mother's eyes and something of his mother's air of *noblesse*, but none of his mother's beauty, and little of her calm, cold languor.

It might have seemed to superficial observers curious that Calla, impulsive and impetuous girl—half child—as she was, should like the cold, stately Mrs. Darrell so well; but Mrs. Darrell was as gentle as she was proud, and Calla was sincerely fond of her. Indeed, although Mr. Darrell was the only member of the family connected with her by ties of kindred, she loved his wife and step-daughter better than himself. Still she liked him. He was a good kind, formal, and proud, but polished and well-mannered gentleman, of studious and secluded habits. He was benevolently disposed towards young people, but always seemed an immeasurable distance from them.

Calla was tired, and slept soundly her first night at La Basse-Rive. When the next morning came, she was sitting up, broad awake, fresh and happy, surveying the room in its morning aspect, the sun glinting in through the green blinds, the waxed and polished wooden floor that seemed so strange to her, the red velvet chairs that looked so luxurious, the mahogany deep box-bedstead where her aunt slept, and the great square blue and white china stove in the corner—when there was a tap at the door, and Fanchette entered with coffee and little rolls of bread on a tray.

Then Isabel came in, fresh and fair as the sunny morning, in a loose white morning wrapper, with her golden hair streaming over her shoulders, and her hands full of roses, rich crimson and pale pink and pure white roses, with the dew upon them.

"Which will you have, Calla? Which will you have, Mrs. King?" she asked, sitting on the foot of Calla's bed, and separating the flowers into little bouquets. "I think a red one will suit you, Mrs. King. A pink one for your dark hair, Calla. And a white one for me."

"You look like a white rose yourself," observed Calla, who sincerely admired Isabel's blonde beauty.

"Drink up your coffee and eat your roll, instead of paying compliments," replied Isabel, who was as sweet and cool and languid as her mother.

"We are not a bit tired, my dear Bell. We could very well have got up to breakfast, I assure you. You spoil us," said Mrs. King.

"Nobody ever gets up to early coffee here—except me. I do sometimes, and take a run in the garden. When you're dressed, we'll go over the garden. You haven't seen half the place yet."

When the coffee and rolls were disposed of, and the toilette made, they went over the grounds accordingly. Felix and Isabel did the honours to Calla; Mr. and Mrs. Darrell followed in their steps at a more leisurely pace with Mrs. King.

In the large garden of the Château de la Basse-Rive there were only two borders of dwarf fruit-trees and shrubs, and one small patch of lawn intersected with flower-beds which could be described as kept in any shape or order; the rest impressed the lookers-on as a wilderness, until they saw the orchard, in comparison with which the garden seemed in apple-pie trim. For the orchard *was* a wilderness, where long grass and nettles flourished knee-deep, and straggling brambles stretched out from the inclosing hedge, and laid traps for the unwary. The field was connected by close ties of kindred with the orchard; the brothers of the orchard brambles straggled there, and members of the nettle family from the orchard had migrated and made settlements in the field. The Darrell's grey pony was grazing there in peaceful companionship with a brindled cow from a neighbouring farm.

"They send their bull in sometimes, and he runs at us," observed Isabel, in a sweet and dreamy way. "The best thing is to dodge behind a tree. I think he ought to be tied up, and I often say so."

"Then why *don't* they tie him up?" inquired practical Calla, feeling a personal interest in the question, for she had a thoroughly cockney distrust of horned cattle.

"I don't know," replied Isabel, whose sublime indifference was evidently the cause of her ignorance on the point. "Now come through this gate and we'll go to the sea; it isn't a quarter of a mile off."

"But I must get my mantle and my gloves, mustn't I?" said Calla, seeing they were going beyond the boundaries of the Château grounds.

"Why? Are you cold? We don't want mantles and gloves," said Isabel, who had only added to her morning-dress a large Leg-horn hat to keep the sun off.

"We live in a primitive and Arcadian way here, Miss Calla, you see," observed Felix. "We meet nobody but the aborigines, and

we don't make a toilette for them. In some things, the life here reminds me pleasantly of the Sandwich Islands—only there—well! sometimes they don't make any toilette at all. I assure you, Isabel is unusually equipped to-day, in your honour, I suppose; or seeing you hat in hand, she thought she'd emulate you. She generally goes about of a morning in a calico poke bonnet."

"A gypsy sun-bonnet, Felix," corrected Isabel.

They crossed a field or two, turned down a lane, followed a narrow track between a hedge and a cornfield, scrambled down a slope, and so came to the blue sea sparkling in the morning sun and breaking in low whispering waves upon the sand. Calla, with a cry of delight, flew forward and dabbled her hands in the foam, careless of getting her feet wet; and, catching up a great handful of damp, sandy sea-weed, buried her face in it and sniffed up the sharp briny odour with purest enjoyment. Except on the voyage across the Channel she had not seen the sea for two years; and the fragrance of the "salt sweet foam" came to her like wine.

"Let us sit down here a little," said Isabel. "This is my favourite rock, Calla, where I sit and read. Lean back, so, on this rock—you'll find it comfortable. Now see, that to the right is the village of Lantreuil. Over there to the left is the Château D'Aulnais. It is a splendid place; we must take you there; it belongs to a Mr. Reynolds—an Englishman. He has a yacht, and is always inviting us to go sailing in it. You see just where that little streak of sunshine is, that line running into the sea is the little pier where they land. The yacht is out now; perhaps if we watch we may see it coming in."

"How *can* people stay at home all their lives!" speculated Felix, looking out to sea, and stretching himself on the sand luxuriously.

"How can they?" echoed Calla, "To be sure, a man need not; but how is a girl to help herself? I can't rush about the world alone. I wish I could! How I should glory and delight in travelling!"

"So should I; but what's the use of wishing?" said Isabel. "I wonder if all the world are born wanderers at heart? or is it only some who have a natural roving taste?"

"Not all, I think; but it is well for the world that the wandering element is born in some," rejoined Felix. "Just think, if each man grew to his birthplace like a limpet to its rock, how little England would be overcrowded, till pestilences came to sweep off the surplus population, and how the vast continents of America, Africa, and Australia would be left almost untenanted save by savages! When your population outgrows the produce of your land, it brims and overflows into the great waste lands waiting to receive it; and so things square themselves."

"I suppose many men leave their country and emigrate; not so much from natural roving tastes as because there isn't room for them, and they must go? And that seems hard on them," said Calla.

"As a rule, the trouble they take to hew out for themselves a path through a wild, rough, half-civilized land would make them a place in their own. It's *work*, real hard work, Miss Calla, is pioneering—the vanguard of civilization have a tough battle to fight. Making your way in a far-off foreign land is no easy task, unless you go into some of the South Sea Islands, and lie under a banana-tree and eat bread-fruit, and let the world go by."

"I sometimes dream I should like that," said Isabel.

"No, you wouldn't," replied her brother. "There's no intellect nor grandeur of soul ever grows up from the islands of the lotoseaters. Illness was never meant to be a good for mankind. There's work enough in the world for all men, and men enough for all work, if it could only be fairly distributed. There's work at home and work abroad. To each man his fitting work, to each work its fitting executors. But for no man nor woman is a life of torpor and do-nothingness of body and soul intended."

The two girls listened, and Isabel's smooth brow clouded a little as she looked down thoughtfully and sifted a handful of sand, and watched the yellow grains slip through her fingers. Calla, full of the same thought, put it into words, after a few moments reflectively looking at Felix, her bright face full of eager attention and questioning.

"If an objectless life was intended for no man nor woman, what special work claims each? I have been wondering that often lately. If one has no special talent, and yet some energy, what field is one called to spend that energy in? It would be useful to wield any talent with, but without the talent it seems like the haft without the blade."

"More like a clasp-knife," he rejoined, smiling. "Where the energy is, some talent of some kind is shut up in it—it's bound to open itself in time."

"Not if the spring gets rusted from want of use," said Isabel softly.

"I think so often," continued Calla, waxing confidential and personal, "what kind of life was meant for a girl like *me*, for instance. I am not much cleverer at one thing than at any other. The one thing I should like to do I am afraid I could not do. Then what am I best fitted for? I don't want to dream my life away in lotoseating. I want to do the best I can with it. I feel uncertain, somehow—I don't know——"

"You feel as I do, Calla," interposed Isabel, as she paused, "the want of some object to follow, some place to fill, something to make the centre of one's life."

"You two girls feel that want simply because your lives are not formed and full enough for you yet," said Felix. "And most girls, in their quiet stay-at-home existences, I think, must feel the same, but your natures, as well as your lives, are immature now; they are only in the early stages of development. There will be a part and a place for each of you some day. It comes in time to every one. Life trains us up in fitness for our place, whatever it is to be. Only we should be ready when it comes to recognize it and seize it, and take possession of it. I've known people who let themselves drift past places they were fit for—and they would drift on into a corner where they didn't fit at all at last. When the round man spins and wanders about, and finally gets stuck in a three-cornered hole, it makes one say, 'the pity of it!' One knows there was his place somewhere, only in his blindness he couldn't find it. But one feels still an assurance that he will find it yet—in some other world."

There was a strong tendency to optimism about Felix Grey; he had a knack of generally turning the light on the rosier side of things, which contrasted with his young sister's inveterate inclination to seek out the shadowy side.

"A place waiting for each of us—a post for each of us to fill! That's beautiful to think," said Calla, with brightening eyes.

"Though if we have to wait until the next world for it, we may have a long time to wait," suggests Isabel.

"But if we are ready on the look-out, unless ill-luck drives hard against us, we run a very good chance of finding our work on earth," responded the other.

"Don't fancy you are going to plunge suddenly deep into an actual tangible piece of work, and going to paint or sing or study for so many hours a day," said Felix practically. "When the time comes that you feel your life has no vacancy, when your occupations fill and satisfy your mind so far as it may be satisfied on earth, contenting you for to-day, and still always leading you onwards, upwards, towards something higher yet for the morrow—then you have found your place. And the outside world generally can't tell a bit whether you are in your place or not; only your own soul knows whether it is at home or in exile."

"I hope we shall all find our home some day!" said Calla hopefully. "There's not much hurry, is there? We are only at the outset of our path, and are, perhaps, scarcely fit to hold our post yet."

"We are at the outset, yes, and we may end in exile, lost and wandering after all," said Isabel.

"Why do you say such sad things always, Isabel?" asked Felix fraternally. "You strike in like a Greek chorus of foreboding. I think you must be dull here; this quiet life seems to have a depressing effect on you. I think you ought to have a change."

"I say sad things because they come across me," replied Isabel, with whose fresh, girlish beauty sad things did indeed seem incongruous. "I *am* dull sometimes; there's nothing stirring to make one anything else *but* dull, generally. I sha'n't be dull or *triste*, though, now that Calla is here; it's a great pleasure for me to have her."

"Not half such a pleasure as it is for me to be here," responded Calla warmly.

"Ah, children! there you are! I thought I should find you on Isabel's favourite rock!" said Mrs. Darrell, as the three elder members of the party came along the sands after the young people.

"Bell has been doing the honours, and showing all the common objects of our sea-shore," I suppose?" observes Isabel's step-father.

"She looks well and bright this morning, and she has been looking pale of late. I think having your young friend with you does you good, my pet!" said Mrs. Darrell, lifting Isabel's fair face up into the sunlight fondly.

With that tender smile of maternal love and pride on her face the mother was as beautiful as her young daughter. There was generally a sadness hidden away in the depths of Mrs. Darrell's eyes, even when she smiled; and when she looked upon her daughter there was always in the very light of her love some shadow of sorrow or memory—it might have been only the shade that great love ever casts, by its own very greatness, standing as it does so often between us and the light of perfect joy.

It needed little acuteness of observation to perceive that Isabel Grey was the darling of her mother's heart. This is not to imply that Mrs. Darrell was not deeply attached to her son Felix also; only it is not often that the balance of affection sways exactly level, however slight and almost imperceptible its variation may be; and of these her two surviving children, Isabel was Mrs. Darrell's especial darling. During Felix's long absence she had become naturally accustomed to live without him; for years he had been only a memory and a hope to her, while her daughter had been a part of her daily life, and growing daily a dearer part. Felix, leading so widely different a life, had, of course, to a certain extent grown into a different tone of thought. They never clashed, but seldom perfectly agreed in opinion; they lived in a peaceful, affectionate, and happy harmony that yet was not quite perfect unison. Such harmonies of different tones of opinion, however, are often really happier than simple accord.

Through Felix's general optimism of theory, mingling intertwined with the faith and the hope and the charity that prevailed therein, there ran a thread of almost stern clear-sightedness and justice that set itself apart from the mercy that co-existed with it, and insisted on playing its own independent rôle. On that first

morning at La Basse-Rive, as they rambled along the sands, wandering lightly from one subject of conversation to another while they strolled aimlessly on, the two girls fell into raptures about the "Lady of Lyons," which Calla had had the delight of seeing on one of her rare visits to the theatre, and which Isabel, to whom theatres were almost unknown ground, had been dreaming over alone in the wilderness yept a garden.

Felix, however, declined to share in their raptures and their sympathies, at least, as far as regarded the hero. For the sorrows and sufferings of Claude Melnotte, he appeared to have but small compassion. Love sorrows did not seem to move his heart at all towards the melting mood; and concerning Claude's chiefly self-wrought suffering, his sentiments were comprised in that common, simple, and colloquial application of justice, "Served him right." The girls saw only the pathetic and poetic side of the story; Felix came down practically on "the base conspiracy and deception," from which he swept aside all excuses like cobwebs, with a strong, if merciless, right hand, and which he pronounced,

"No matter for what purpose, cowardly and unpardonable."

"A great many things are unpardonable in your eyes, Felix, are they not?" observed Mrs. Darrell, joining in the conversation as she came up with the younger group.

"Well, I trust not so very many, mother, for I never dare to hope my sins will be forgiven otherwise than as I forgive."

"It is easy enough to forgive the sinners whose sins are such as we might ourselves be lured into committing; but not so easy to pardon those who fall before a temptation whose strength we cannot comprehend," said Mrs. Darrell quietly.

"True; but from the full comprehension of the temptations to cowardice and treachery, deliver us!"

"If you cannot comprehend," Mrs. Darrell rejoined, "you cannot fully forgive. And without forgiveness I think there was never redemption or reformation yet. But you hold, I suppose, all sins irredeemable and unpardonable that fall below the level to which you can conceive yourself sinking in some erring moment."

"Mother mine, do you think I am so very hard?" Felix asked, looking in her face in his simple, straightforward way, almost as if he had been a boy at her knee again.

"No, my dear boy, not *hard*; only it seems to me that you lack a little in comprehension of the great truth that if you would redeem and raise from any sin or shame, you must not look down and judge from your height of untempted virtue; you must bend even to the sinner's level, and reach your hand to him, and not fear nor scruple to grasp *his* hand and help him on the upward way."

"You are right and true in every word, mother; it is a truth I hope never to fail in recognizing. But for all that, a truth I am

afraid, not generally comprehended among women," he added meditatively. "It takes a woman pure, and brave, and strong to dare to see it and act upon it. *You* might dare to plunge your hand into pitch and draw it out again undefiled," he continued, with an unusual intonation of confidence and affection in his voice (for they were not, on the whole, a demonstrative family), "but—well, will you think me a misogynist for saying that I don't fancy we have so very many like you in the world."

Felix admired his mother sincerely, and possibly accredited her with all the more virtues because he was dimly conscious that he did not thoroughly comprehend her. At his unusual effusion of filial appreciation, Mrs. Darrell must have been highly gratified; she returned her son's smile very tenderly, but her colour deepened suddenly into an almost painful flush for which there certainly was not the slightest occasion, and for a moment something seemed to dim the clear regard of her large, mournful brown eyes as they were fixed with a half-sad affection on his face for a moment, and then turned somewhat tremulously away.

She was a woman whom her habitual, tranquil and gentle reserve befitted well, yet when there came a little life, and emotion, and colour into her pale, calm, pensive face, it lent it a new beauty, a new interest; it seemed to throw a glimmer of light upon the possibility of a past loveliness which had gone from her as utterly as the glory of the after-glow melts off from an Alpine peak, and leaves it cold, and white, and calm in the closing evening. Sometimes when a passing flash of light and colour changed her face, and the close, soft, clinging veil of her reserve seemed to stir and flutter a little, although it never fell aside, a physiognomist looking on her would wonder whether, "Even in these ashes slept their wonted fires?" or whether the fires had once flamed so fiercely that it had long ago burnt itself out, and left no lingering life-warmth in the grey, cold ashes of some dead passion.

She looked as if, like Galatea, she had gone back to marble for refuge from mortal pain. She must have been far more beautiful than her daughter when at her daughter's age. It was no wonder that when she was Gertrude Glynnley, an orphan girl of scarcely seventeen—the penniless daughter of a ruined father—well born, well bred, highly educated, reduced from comparative wealth to absolute poverty—making the long, weary voyage to Australia to join some relatives there, she should have so attracted, won, and fixed the love of Matthew Grey, passenger by the same vessel, going out to seek his fortune, that they were married almost immediately on their landing.

Nor was it much of a marvel (though some of Mr. Darrell's friends considered it amazing) that, long years after that first wooing and winning, when at the sea-side, by a chance introduction

Mr. Darrell became acquainted with this fair, pale widow, with her large and lovely eyes. he should have decided on a week's acquaintance to ask her to be his wife.

She was residing in England again then. Matthew Grey, after some ten or twelve years of marriage, had died in Australia. Gertrude Grey had returned to her native land, and had been living there for some time, poor, but not penniless, leading a quiet life, retired from society, and devoted to the care of her little girl, the youngest child and only daughter. Of her two sons, who had also accompanied her to England, the eldest had married and died; the younger, Felix, had gone back to Australia, hating an idle life of dependence on his mother, boy as he was in years, with all a man's longing to work his own way in the world, and availing himself gladly of an offered chance in the other hemisphere, while his brother worked equally hard to open for himself in England a career which would probably have been a bright one had it not been cut short by his early death.

Thus Mrs. Grey was left with only little Isabel to comfort her in her mourning and her loneliness, when Mr. Darrell met her first. He was supposed to be a confirmed old bachelor then, and she, too, had left her youth long behind, although her charm and her grace seemed imperishable, and had well outlasted the fickle glory of girlish bloom. Her very sadness and solitude held a certain attraction for this confirmed old bachelor, who was also sad and solitary, and a very brief acquaintance with Gertrude Grey proved to him that he was by no means so confirmed in celibacy as he and his friends had thought.

"And so the bells rung out, and these two were wed."

Whether Mrs. Darrell loved her second husband with "The love of women when they love their best," no one knew. The ever-present sadness in her eyes might have been taken to imply that her heart lay buried in that far-off Australian grave, and her devoted love for Isabel might have seconded the idea.

But there was no doubt that the Darrells led a very contented, comfortable, and peaceful life together. Mr. Darrell was kind and fatherly to his fair young step-daughter, and never manifested any tendency to jealousy of her mother's evident devotion to her. As to Felix, he got on excellently well with his step-father. To say that they were warmly attached to each other would perhaps be employing too strong terms; but having so recently been thrown together in their new relationship, strangers as they were till then, it was not altogether to be expected that they should have become such truly good friends. There even seemed to be a sort of congeniality in the grain of the core of both natures, different as they were on the surface. Some radical resemblance there must have been to

move them so mutually and speedily to a sincere liking, esteem and respect. So there was peace and comfort in the mixed family at the Château de la Basse-Rive.

Perhaps for a young girl like Isabel, pretty and graceful, and full of a soft susceptibility to excitement, and romantic dreams and fancies, under the superficial languid serenity, the life there was a trifle too isolated and eventless and secluded. But Mr. and Mrs. Darrell liked it well, and were perfectly contented. They both disliked the life in great cities, and were indifferent to society—an indifference which might have seemed strange in a woman of Mrs. Darrell's appearance, manner and culture, but with which her husband agreed too thoroughly to wonder at it. Although she was so well fitted to shine in the society she almost wholly abjured, he regarded her indifference—indeed her aversion—as the feeling most fit and natural to the autumn of a life whose early summer, like his own, had been clouded by domestic sorrow—or rather, perhaps, he simply accepted the fact, and never thought of inquiring at all into the reason of a taste which so perfectly coincided with his own.

CHAPTER IV

“OH, HEAVEN! THAT ONE MIGHT READ THE BOOK OF FATE!”

LIFE at the Château de la Basse-Rive might not have suited every taste. Some would have voted it slow and dull, for its daily level was certainly somewhat monotonous. Others would have considered that its habits and customs compromised rather too much of “roughing it.”

Calla delighted in it; the primitiveness of the household proceedings there afforded her a perpetual source of amusement, while Mrs. King enjoyed the complete change of life and manners quietly. The servants cost rather less trouble than the average French domestics employed by English families usually do; and the wheels of the establishment, as a rule, ran pretty smoothly—in their way.

The rule of La Bassa-Rive was that when a thing was not done that ought to have been done, its omission was tranquilly endured; and when a thing was done that ought not to have been done, its intrusive existence was simply ignored. It did occasionally happen, to be sure, that the pig took advantage of the windows opening on to the court-yard to enter the salon and grout with curious nose beneath the pedals of the piano, nor was it a thing quite unknown for a gratified “cluck-cluck” beneath the dining-table to announce the presence of an adventurous hen who had strayed thither in

search of crumbs. In these cases the intruders were summarily, but serenely, without any sensation or surprise, driven back to their own quarters.

The monotony of life was occasionally broken, also, by such incidents as the breaking loose of a neighbour's bull, consequently breaking down of the Château fence, and flight of all the family to barricade themselves in the house—or the appearance in the courtyard of a vagrant sheep, frantic excitement of the dogs, and compensation for damaged wool demanded by indignant owner, to say nothing of the milder excitements of occasional but not frequent visits to and from the only English families near—the Reynolds's, inhabitants of the Château D'Aulnais some three miles off on one side, and the Smiths, who occupied La Maison Blanche, about five miles off on the other.

Felix and Calla still and always got on very well together. Indeed their friendship reached the height of perpetual playing at enemies. They argued, disagreed, fought pitched battles, renewed the same conflict day after day, called each other mutually "Mine enemy," and were the very best of friends. Isabel enjoyed Calla's society with all her heart; the two young girls were on the most sisterly terms. They went for long, wandering rambles with Felix by sunlight and moonlight, were up and out on the broad, lonely sands before breakfast, and out in the silent fields and shady lanes at night when the after-dinner coffee was done.

They were never dull, reading, talking, sentimentalizing over books and theories, Felix relating anecdotes of his travels according to traveller's wont, and the girls listening with girlish enthusiasm.

In Felix's anecdotes a certain friend of his, named Julius Lusada, figured frequently, in fact, figured as the hero more frequently than Felix himself, for the latter's stories were not all purely autobiographical nor related for the display of self to advantage.

"What is this Mr. Lusada like?—and where is he now?—and have you known him long?" asked Calla one day, she being a true daughter of Eve.

"He's somewhere in the West. If the war had lasted, he would have been in the thick of it now. But as it is, I suppose he's on some speculation down in Southern California by this time. I have known him ever since I left Australia. Didn't I ever tell you how he and I first became acquainted? No? Well, then, it was in an odd way enough. It was when I made the voyage from Melbourne to San Francisco. The cook and steward on board was a handsome young fellow, with what some of us interpreted as rather a sulky, dangerous look, though I never could see it; it only seemed to me that he was well able to take his own part—so well, that even the captain didn't meddle with him over much. I took rather a fancy to him from the first, and was with him a good deal. It

wasn't a passenger-ship, you know—only a rough trading-vessel, the "Cormorant," so there was no cabin company, and I used to be very often talking to Sandy, as they called him there; but he never told me much about himself, except that he'd lost his pile in Australia, and was working his way back to his own country. Well, in San Francisco we parted, he and I and went our different ways; but a strange wind blew us together a year or two afterwards."

"How? Tell us," demanded the two girls together.

Felix hesitated a moment, and an amused smile twitched the corner of his mouth, though his eyes were grave enough.

"Well," he then said, "I had got myself into a bit of a scrape—it was through sticking to a friend, so I don't regret it to this day. I was—to put it in the most delicate manner—resigning myself philosophically to a temporary detention until it should please the law of the land to examine into my case, and pronounce whether I was a good fellow or a bad one. But the examination never came off."

He looked at the two girls, and could not repress a broad smile at the amazed curiosity on their faces. Then he went on, falling into his usual narrative vein, and evidently getting more interested in this memory as the past scene shaped itself more clearly before him.

"The prison doors were broken open that night. How well I recollect the threatening murmur outside, and the crash of the bursting bolts! It was a case of lynch-law. The Vigilantes were out (men in masks, you know, bent on rough, retributive justice)," he added parenthetically. "They got in, of course—they generally did get in where they had a mind to enter. Well, they locked the sheriff in his room. They came to where I was, and in the figure and voice of one of the ringleaders—it's a figure not to be mistaken—I recognized my friend Sandy, the quondam steward. We gripped hands then and there. The sheriff saw no more of me. Lusada and I were off together before dawn."

"But you said it was a case of lynch-law?" questioned Calla, ever inquisitive. "Who were they after then? Not you?"

"Not *me*!—no, I rather think not! If they had been after *me*, I shouldn't have been here retailing these reminiscences to you now; and the grey wolves would probably have had the felicity of picking my bones."

"Did they kill the man, then?"

"Look here, children—you'd better drop the curtain there. The rest of the story is not for you. You've heard all *my* part in it."

Isabel and Calla let that branch of the subject pass as he bid them; but they were primed with relays of other inquiries with which they assailed Felix almost simultaneously, and with eager emphasis.

"How did you get into prison?"

"Was it a *real* prison?"

"Why did *he* join the Vigilantes?"

"Why was he disguised as a cook on board the vessel?"

"Why was he passing under a false name?"

"He joined the Vigilantes for justice," responded Felix, who apparently could see no flaw in his hero. "Law and justice don't always go hand-in-hand, even here; and in that rough life in the wildest part of the country, where the administration of the law was deficient where it wasn't corrupt, as a rule, by all *I* saw," he added, being a young man who was habitually guarded in his statements, "the Vigilantes who took the law into their own hands had generally a kind of wild justice on their side; and as to disguise, he wasn't *disguised*. He was working his passage over because he couldn't afford to pay it. He was dressed in fustians because he couldn't afford broadcloth. He was known as 'Sandy' just because the name happened to have stuck to him (he's a fellow with tawny hair and a leonine beard), and he didn't care to give his own name just then; but there was no real change in the *man* ever since I've known him. Except that he looks prosperous and happy instead of sullen and shut up in a sort of rough reserve—the Lusada I said good-bye to last year in all the flush of success, with his handsome face, and his dashing, daring ways, is the very 'Sandy' I knew as steward on the 'Cormorant.' He has made money and lost, and made again. It was he who was my companion and my leader on that expedition down the South Pacific Coast which was to make us all millionaires, but didn't. He is well off now though; at the top of the wheel."

"I should like to see him," said Isabel.

"Somehow I don't quite think I should like him," observed Calla.

"I think you would," rejoined Felix; "he is a man who has led the roughest, wildest life, and carried through it the gentleness of a woman, and the courtesy of a prince—when he chooses—a man whose adventures dwarf mine into mole-hills, a tall, splendid fellow who isn't soon forgotten when once known, I can tell you!"

"Well, I should be very glad to see this hero, and compare him with your glowing description of him!" said Calla incredulously, rather impressed in her heart, but determined not to acknowledge it.

"*Mine enemy* will not allow a single good quality in my friend," said Felix smiling. "By-the-by, Bell, what did you do with that packet of photographs I gave you to take care of when I went to London?—there was one of Lusada there," he added.

"I don't know," replied Isabel reflectively; "they lay on the drawing-room table and then mamma put them in the cupboard, and then I had them out to look at, and then—oh, I think they were put in the bureau."

"Well, come let us look in the bureau, then, and we'll show Miss Calla that her enemy's friend is a better looking fellow than she thought possible, going upon the adage that 'birds of a feather flock together.'"

"After what you've told us, that adage accounts for your proficiency in cooking. I'm always wondering who you are going to poison, when I see you making love to Marie Rose ever the *bouillon*. Probably I should be the victim, I know, so I never begin to eat until I see my enemy has dipped into the dish first; then I feel safe," observed Calla.

"It wouldn't be in the *bouillon* I should put poison if I wanted to rid my path of this especial torment; it would be in the cheese-cakes," said Felix, who had learnt by this time the most of Calla's tastes, of which one prominent one was a serious inclination for cheese-cakes—"by one, by two, by three."

They opened the bureau, and began searching in the drawers and pigeon-holes for the packet of photographs. The interior disposition of the bureau was quite characteristic of and consistent with the family customs of the Château de la Basse-Rive.

Each drawer was crammed till it could scarcely be opened, each pigeon-hole was overflowing. Old letters, old manuscripts of Mr. Darrell's, magazines, papers, extracts, engravings, crochet-patterns and old-fashioned plates of modes extinct as the dodo, were crowded together and rolled in bundles without any attempt at arrangement.

Isabel had lately taken the principal possession of the bureau, and there lay knick-knacks, broken trinkets, ribbons, valentines, books, souvenirs of hers in heaps, among the reams of waste paper that would never be used or thought of, yet certainly never destroyed while the Darrell family reigned over the establishment. In one of the drawers Felix's packet came to light, and he showed the photograph of Julius Lusada to Calla and Isabel.

"H'm, rather stagey, but—well, I suppose he is handsome!" observed Calla critically. "Oh, Isabel, do let us put this place a little bit tidily! Look! here's a champagne cork, a pink ribbon, and a pill box! and what do you want all these old newspapers for?"

"I don't know; I suppose they have all got something in them," said Isabel tranquilly.

"What's this rolled up in one of them?" continued Calla, pulling something out from the back of a pigeon-hole, and extracting from folds of papers a faded red leather folding portrait-case. "Two portraits. Who are these, dear?"

"Why, it's poor Glynnley's portrait! Why, on earth have you poked it away here, Bell? and is this his wife?" asked Felix.

"It's my brother that died," explained Isabel to Calla. "And this is his wife; you know she died too. There, see their names are

written 'Glynnley Grey; Rachael Grey. Wasn't she pretty? I saw her once, when I was at school."

"I never saw her; I had gone back to Australia when Glynnley married," said Felix. "It's a sweet face, Isabel, if she was like this. Why do you let it lie here? it's the only portrait I have seen of poor Glynnley."

"I put it here because it upsets mamma so to look at it," replied Isabel. "She made herself quite ill with brooding and grieving when she found it in her old desk. I think it re-opened all the old wounds just as if Glynnley and Rachel had only died last week. She gave it me; and I knew she wanted me to keep it out of her daily sight, although she did not say so. I meant to lock it up; but it is quite as safe here. Mamma never comes here now; she has quite given these pigeon-holes up to me."

"That's my good thoughtful little sister," said Felix, approvingly. "But I am glad we found it; I am glad to have seen this portrait of the sister-in-law I never knew."

"She looks very sweet and charming. Did she die long after him?" asked Calla sympathetically.

"Very soon, I think; they died almost together, I have heard; and they had only been married two or three months; was it not sad? And yet I don't know that their fate was so unhappy. If they were really fond of each other it would have been far sadder for the survivor if one had outlived the other long," said Isabel.

"But to die so young—and so beautiful!" mused Calla, looking pensively on the faded shadows of the two young faces that must indeed in life have possessed rare beauty. Rachel was a fair, child-like girl, delicate as a flower. Glynnley had evidently had his full share of the family beauty; he must have been far handsomer than his brother—indeed, as Calla could not help noticing, it seemed as if Felix had been unfairly dealt with in the distribution of attractions, and Glynnley and Isabel had come in for the lion's portion. However, Felix's face was dear and familiar to her now, and she would not have had him change it for even Apollo's features.

"Now, Calla—Felix, do put those portraits away now. I am afraid mamma will be coming," said Isabel uneasily.

Calla felt much interested in the story of Glynnley Grey and his bride and their early death; it appealed strongly to her sympathies and her imagination; and directly Felix had left them she turned to Isabel with inquiries as to the "full, true, and particular" history; but Isabel seemed to know very little beyond the bare fact of their death. She had been a child at school at the time, and had been forbidden to talk to her mother on the subject, as the blow had fallen so heavily on Mrs. Grey that her health suffered severely from it and agitation was very bad for her.

"I think Glynneley must have been her especial hope and pride—her eldest boy, you know; and you can see what a fine handsome fellow he was. She has never *quite* got over it, I fancy—never been quite the same," said Isabel, softly and sadly. "And Glynneley's name is never, never mentioned here, Calla. And though mamma and I love each other now more than all the whole world beside, even I never venture to hope a day will come when I may touch upon that subject and talk it over with her."

So Calla's wish to hear the whole story of Glynneley Grey remained ungratified; although the hero of the other photograph they had that morning unearthed from the recesses of the bureau she heard again and often, for Felix was always ready and willing to talk of his friend Lusada. And in her memory that girlish retentive memory which stored away all anecdotes and ideas and suggestions savouring of romance, as a child retains every detail of a fairy-tale, she laid away together the names of Julius Lusada and Glynneley Grey. One was a dead-and-gone past; the other was as far off, remote, and dreamlike to her as that buried past itself; yet in her youthful reveries she often dreamt over these two names till other thoughts washed over them and hid them away, and she forgot, little deeming that the time would come when all those overflowing thoughts and dreams would ebb, and yet leave those two names graven uneffaced.

She had always known that Mrs. Darrell had lost her eldest son, and had hitherto never thought much about the loss; but now the few words she had heard from Isabel inspired her with a new sympathy and a deeper affection than ever for Isabel's serene, sad-eyed mother. She was perhaps too young and inexperienced to fully realize the depth of a great sorrow; but she observed now, with a sense of awe and sympathy and reverence, as if she had been standing by a grave, the utter silence always guarded on the subject of Glynneley Grey. She would as soon have thought of trying to wrench open a tomb as of making any allusion before Mrs. Darrell to the forbidden subject. Nor did she ever think that this reserve so zealously kept was at all strange. She knew that Mrs. Darrell was of the deep natures that suffer deeply and silently. As to Mrs. Darrell's own family, they were so thoroughly accustomed to the silence on that point—it had become such a matter-of-course—that they no more dreamt of thinking it peculiar than of breaking through it.

The June days went peacefully and beautifully by, and the day drew near when Mrs. King and Calla were to return to London. They were all more or less sorry as the time came. Mrs. King's society was very welcome at La Basse-Rive, all the more welcome that there was only a very small amount of cultivated and intellectual English society to be had for many miles around. Calla's

bright presence was like sunshine in the house, and brightened often into equal gaiety her quiet, dreamy-eyed friend, Isabel. Mrs. Darrell, fond of Calla herself, held her still dearer on account of her healthy and enlivening influence over Isabel. They would all miss her when she left them.

As their last evening together was a fine one, the three young people, of course, went off together for a farewell starlight ramble. They took the path to the sands, and loitered by the sea. The sky was gray and mysterious, and light, floating clouds drifted between the stars and veiled them here and there, but the moon was full and bright, the sea was calm, and a broad, bright path of moonlight led away from the shore, straight across the grey waters. Where did it seem to stretch away to? No earthly land surely.

One little vessel crossed that road of light—a black speck in the flood of brightness.

“One fancies it is sailing right along the moonlight to the islands of the blest,” said Calla,

“But the night is calm, it will not sail so far,” said Isabel, “And yet there have been wrecks on this coast.”

“It need not go to the Island of Avalon for beauty; earth is beautiful enough,” said Calla, glancing along the sands that lay yellow in the moonlight. “How bright it is—one could see to write,” she continued, slowly stretching words with Felix’s stick in the sand.

“What are you writing, Calla?” asked Isabel. “G-o-o — Ah! ‘Good-bye.’ That’s the right word, isn’t it?”

“Not the right word,” interposed Felix. “Why have we no word in English to express the French *au revoir*! or the German *Auf Wiedersehen*! We’ll all be here together again next summer, I hope.”

“Things don’t repeat themselves, they say,” observed Isabel, with a little sigh. “Something will be changed.”

“And this is our very, very last evening walk,” said Calla, in a voice unusually soft and subdued.

Felix looked at her, and saw that her dark eyes were drooping, as if with tears.

“Are you sorry then, Calla? We can’t be sorry to see you so; it makes us feel we’ve won in you a true friend—so true, young as she is, as never to change.”

“Never,” she answered earnestly. “How could I forget you all when you are the only real friends I have, and Isabel the only real companion?”

“And am I counted as one of ‘all?’” inquired Felix. “You have not known me for as many years, of course. I wonder if you would forget me if I were not ‘one of them?’”

“You know I would not. I am sure we are just as good friends

as if we had known each other always. You have done me so much good—you have brought such a new influence and new thoughts into my life," she added, with a confiding frankness which a year or two hence would be impossible, but which now seemed the most natural thing in the world to them all; you see so straight, and judge so broadly and truly, I feel that if ever I were in a maze of difficulties, and could not disentangle right from wrong, you would make it all clear for me."

"You would not need my help," said Felix. "You are true and clear-seeing, and strong yourself, and not apt to be misled into mazes of sophistries and subtleties. You would burst through the tangle, and break free into the light."

"Every one can stand alone, I suppose; and yet it's solitary to be left leaning on one's own strength. I don't like being alone. I shall miss you so, Calla!" said Isabel. "We were always good friends, weren't we? But this time we seem to have got on better and understood each other better than ever. And Felix has been with us; and we have been such a nice trio."

"We will go on understanding and liking each other better and better as we get older," rejoined Calla sanguinely, her native brightness and gaiety reasserting itself; "and when we're quite old, old fogies, we'll be a nice trio still!"

"You in cap-fronts and corkscrew curls—grey, profusely sprinkled with white—and a fat poodle dog each! I also with a respectable bald pate, fringed with a very few hairs, and those silver!" pictured Felix. "We shall all cough and expatiate on our ailments, and lean on a stick with our emaciated and claw-like hands; and we shall habitually address each other as 'Friend of my youth'—and perhaps quarrel and part at last about which of us is the oldest, and are we eighty-one or eighty-two; for age will be a delicate point with us then!"

"We will prove friends can be true for life!" said Calla, in all the joyous earnestness of her confident young heart.

"One great test of faith is whether we can be true *with* each other as well as true *to* each other," observed Felix.

"Is not the last enough?" said Isabel. "What Milton wrote of Melancholy seems as true of absolute Truth,

'Her saintly visage is too bright,
To hit the sense of human sight,'"

"Then let us rather blind ourselves by daring to gaze at her than bandage our eyes from the light!" said Felix; and Calla echoed the sentiment with bright eager eyes that seemed as if no truth could dazzle or bewilder them.

In these random words they unconsciously struck the key-notes of their differing natures. In Felix there was a certain steadfastness of strength, a firm and fearless following of his standard, not defy-

ing, but enduring, the wounds it cost—in Calla the courage of latent passion, the inherent truth-worship of absolute purity of soul that enables these two to pierce through mists wherein Isabel would lose herself in a maze of dreams and veil her dazed eyes if the sun broke through, and perhaps turn away to follow a Will o' the Wisp. She was her mother's child, in heart and soul. Yet from this innate and unperceived difference could no one venture to forecast that their destiny should be happier than hers.

Not only our weakness, not only our wavering, not only our error or our crimes, shipwreck our lives for us. Sometimes over such reefs the vessel rides light and safe, and runs its risk and weathers the storm, and anchors in its harbour unhurt. And sometimes on the very rocks of our own faith and strength and truth, the frail bark of our happiness drives to surer wreck than on any shoals of sin. Yet better so to sink, and sinking to fly our true colours to the last, than through those shoals and shallows to drift on a devious passage to a seeming safety.

We cannot see towards what shore we steer; we can but steer straight on our course by our own Polar star. We may drive against the granite rock of our own faith and shatter the ship that carries the cargo of all our joys; but better so than to seek such safe anchorage as tempts us to swerve aside to the smooth shore where the sirens sing.

BOOK II.

IN THE PLEASANT LAND OF BOHEMIA.

“How should Love—
 When the cross-lightnings of four chance-met eyes
 Flash into fiery life from nothing—follow
 Such dear familiarities of dawn?”

TENNYSON—*Atmel's Field*.

CHAPTER V

“SOLE DAUGHTER OF MY HOUSE AND HEART!”

NOTWITHSTANDING Calla's genuine regret at leaving La Basse-Rive, she really appeared, and was as much delighted to enter London again as she had been to leave it. Was it not *home*? Not a very luxurious or magnificent home to *her*, certainly; their nest near the chimney-pots was a very modest one; and Mrs. King was half-surprised, and more than half gratified, by the girl's outspoken gladness at being again in “the dear, dear old place! the grandest city in all the world!” of whose supremacy among cities, however, Calla, not having any experience of any other cities beyond a day at Southampton and a week at Liverpool, was scarcely a competent judge.

Her heart bounded as the train slackened along the bridge across the well-known dear dingy river, which a little way out of London is so *fair*. She regarded the very chimney-pots with absolute affection; she welcomed the columns of smoke; the sea of dingy red and black tiles looked to her almost as lovely as the broad blue ocean. It was not a bright day; it was one of the days of which Felix was wont to say “there was no sky, only atmosphere, and that muggy!” But there seemed sunbeams in all the air to Calla.

Her eager eyes watched the shops and streets go by—and they went by so slowly, as the cab lumbered on!—until the vehicle drew up at 21, Clarence Street!

The door flew open instantly; the landlady appeared on the threshold, smiling graciously and with unusual *empressement*; behind her was Polly, on the broad grin with excitement. Innocent

Calla interpreted this excitement and *empressement* as a "welcome home;" but it was not that quite pure and simple.

"There's a nice little surprise for you, mum, upstairs, mum," ejaculated Polly.

"Be quiet, Polly," said Mrs. Smith severely. "I hope as you'll be gratified, ma'am, and Miss, too. In the drawing-room, if you please, ma'am."

Wondering what the surprise could be, and why they were honoured by an invitation into the drawing-rooms, Mrs. King hurried upstairs; Calla, of course, was up before her, and had flung open the drawing-room door.

There was an unusual display of flowers in the window and on the mantel-piece; an unusually magnificent meal spread with Mrs. Smith's best china set out upon the table; and in one corner of the room stood a large trunk. But Calla saw only one thing of all the room—a man's figure—a big, dark, bearded man. She stopped short with a cry of half-doubt, half-delight, and the blood flamed into her face.

"Why, my little girl! my little girl! and is it you? and you've not forgotten me, then?" he said, gladly and smiling.

"Oh, papa! papa!"

Calla, breathless, could say no more; she threw herself into his arms; and the first tears of pure joy she had ever shed gushed from her eyes, as she sobbed upon his breast.

Mrs. King's surprise and pleasure and welcome followed of course. She was sincerely astonished. In her secret heart she had sometimes fancied and feared that Tom Yorke, her errant brother-in-law, would never be seen back in England again, and that, beyond occasional letters and remittances (the latter not too frequent, but as frequent as poor, reckless Tom could afford), Calla would never know anything more of her father.

He, perhaps, did not know how nearly he hit on the truth when he said—

"Well, Sarah, did you think I was going to leave this little maid on your hands for ever?"

"You are not going to take her away?" said Mrs. King, with a sudden look of anxiety, realizing that if he meant to carry Calla away to the other side of the world, his return might not, to Calla's aunt, at least, be such a blessing as it had at first appeared.

"Take her away?" questioned Mr. Yorke. "Oh, back to America, you mean? Why, I'm not going back myself, not for awhile, at least. I've made enough, with the prospects I have in London, to get on for a time here. And beyond that time I don't look. I've done with looking into the future long ago. Now, in the present, here am I, here's my little daughter, and here's my good sister, to whom I trusted her. I've got a little money in my

pocket (I dare say you're surprised at that ; you can't be more surprised than I was), and we've got to spend it.'

Calla's father had never spoken a truer word than when he said he never looked beyond the present. Money burnt his pocket ; economy was a word not in his dictionary ; saving was to him a thing unknown. He might have perhaps understood the putting away of a hundred pounds in a bank, but then he never had a hundred pounds to put away ; he could comprehend that by repeating that transaction of investing a hundred pounds ten times over, he would be in possession of a thousand pounds and interest. But the equally simple arithmetic which would have proved to him that successive sovereigns and half-sovereigns would in time make up a hundred pounds, he never could understand. If he had ever had money enough to think it worth saving, he might have invested it, but then, probably, he would have chosen some bubble bank paying 20 per cent.

To see Tom Yorke pay a cab, dipping his hand into a pocket full of gold and silver, loose and promiscuously mingled, and asking "what was the fare?" marked at once to any observant eye, to which particular species of the great genus Man he belonged. An amiable and docile species, yet withal somewhat dangerous, easy to tame, but difficult to domesticate. He was thoroughly Bohemian, reckless, handsome, good-natured—just the sort of father a daughter always loves and pets and spoils, and is spoiled by in return. People were often impatient and indignant with him for "wasting his time or his money," or "throwing away his chances," but they generally liked him well, nevertheless. Sarah King could not help being fond of her graceless brother-in-law in a deprecating, half-compassionate kind of way ; he was generally "poor Tom !" to her, and even while she blamed him, and heaped severe (though, to say the truth, too often just), judgments on his head, there was always a soft corner in her heart that he could reach. As for Calla, she had never dreamt for a moment of questioning the wisdom of any of her father's proceedings, and the filial affection that had been one of the strongest feelings of her childhood, blazed up now into a brighter flame than ever.

How much they had to talk of ! all the mutual news of years to hear and tell ! Calla was overflowing with chatter about the Darrells and Felix Grey, of course. Was it not odd, she said, that papa should never have met Felix in America ? The idea of its being "odd" that two wandering travellers should not meet in America, furnished some material for mirth to Mr. Yorke, who, being in a hilarious mood, laughed at everything—the old, hearty, jovial laugh which rang through Calla's childish memories a gay refrain, that, now heard once more after so long a lapse of silence, filled her with a joy of which the excitement was almost painful.

Tom Yorke appeared to be equally joyful on his side at this re-union. He was full of paternal pride and affection, and was evidently prepared to find fresh manifestations of brilliance to move him to laughter or of good sense to waken his admiration, every time his daughter opened her lips. Mrs. King saw with mild dismay that her care not to flatter and "spoil" Calla, and her endeavours to preserve her from the pitfall of vanity, were likely to prove quite wasted trouble now that a father had appeared upon the scene who exclaimed, "Good, that! very good!" and "Clever little puss!" upon the slightest possible opportunity. He was very full, of course, of anecdotes about the American civil war. Calla would gladly have made him into a hero; but he spoilt his chances of being raised on a pedestal of martial glory by candidly confessing that a little "commissariat" and a good deal of newspaper correspondence was all that *he* had had to do with the great conflict.

But to all his hearsay anecdotes of fire and field, Calla listened with breathless interest. Nor did she forget to inquire after everybody in America, native or English, public or private, whose name she had ever heard mentioned with any interest by Felix Grey; and foremost on the list stood, of course, Julius Lusada. Mr. Yorke thought he knew that name—thought he had seen the fellow somewhere—dashing filibustering fellow—a friend of Felix Grey's, eh?

"Well, you all seem mighty fond of Felix! what sort of a fellow is he? I remember I used to hear from his mother about his being such a 'good boy' that I always pictured him as one of those quiet fellows who are sure to be up to mischief. He's not that, then, eh? His mother's a charming woman; I'll bet he's not as good-looking as she is!"

The day after his return, Mr. Yorke took Calla out, and bade her choose herself a dress, a hat, and a mantle in Regent Street. He had been lucky, and he wished to see his little daughter well got-up, he said, surveying her attire with depreciatory eyes.

The next morning Calla stood unusually long before the glass arraying herself. She had never been so well-dressed before—at least, not since the days of her childhood, when her small embroidered frocks and tiny silk shoes had helped to melt away the money that melted all too fast. Now, as she settled the pretty hat, with its long curling ostrich feather, on her, for once, neatly braided hair, and noticed the graceful contours that the new costume seemed to lend her figure (though it only discovered the possibilities of grace that had been hitherto wasted), and heard the soft *frou-frou* rustle, and looked on the shimmering blue of her trained silk skirt, she felt for perhaps the first time in her life an interest and a delight in her personal appearance and apparel. Mrs. King had never encouraged her to think much about such things, having a virtuous horror of conceit and coquetry; but the good aunt

might have spared her caution, for Calla was only too careless and indifferent, and delighted to be let alone. The feminine instinct with which most girls are born, and their possession of which they manifest even from their babyhood, developed singularly late in Calla Yorke, and only now began to take its rightful place.

Polly, with Mrs. King, assisted at Calla's toilette. It was to Polly an affair of great importance. She took up a fluting of the blue silk dress between her finger and thumb, having -- from habit -- given the said members a preliminary rub on her apron to purify them for the contact.

"Lor, Miss Calla, it really be a *lovely* silk! I never did think to see you in sich a one! Who'd ever a thought as your Pa was sich a 'igh gentleman! I 'ope 'e ain't too 'igh to stop here, for he's the grandest gentleman as ever we've 'ad."

Mr. Yorke's prosperity was indeed a popular theme in the household. For Calla, in her well-worn and out-grown frocks, with her open and laughing economies, her frank contentment in their frugal life; Calla, generally regarded a "genteel" but penniless orphan, with only the probable career of nursery-governesshood before her, they had never anticipated the sudden appearance of a wealthy and liberal father. They appraised his wealth according to the lavishness of his expenditure, and consequently exaggerated it considerably; and in the shining light of Mr. Yorke's glory, even the lamp of Felix Grey's popularity was eclipsed.

Tom Yorke liked to be a centre of attraction, and he did not contemplate moving from Clarence Street -- at least, not for a little time. The rooms would do very well for the present, he said. When they wanted to give a party, why then, of course, they must move, and then would be time enough.

He had no idea of leading a solitary and secluded life in London. He wanted to see people; he wanted his little daughter to be seen, He had letters of introduction, and presented them right and left; he looked up old friends, the majority of whom held some post in the wide field of literature, which yet never widens enough for all the jostling combatants thereon nowadays to find elbow room.

Tom Yorke's had not been an unknown name in journalism once, and his talent was of that kind which generally sets a brilliant mark on ephemeral literature of the day, but seldom or never leaves a trace when that day has gone the way of all days.

It was through him that his sister-in-law, Sarah King, had first gained a corner in the contested ground from which she had since then earned the chief part of her slender income. Tom Yorke had retreated in disgust from the closely-serried ranks long ago. Now, not being absolutely compelled thereto, he wanted to take up his old weapon, the pen, again.

He often took Calla with him on his rounds of visits; and some-

times she sat silent, horribly bored, and sometimes listened with eager eyes to some conversation on travels, literature, or the drama.

One day he came home with an invitation to a party the next evening for himself and Calla, and wanted to take his sister-in-law too, assuring her that "everybody would be glad to see her; and what difference could one more or less in a room make?"

Mrs. King smiled and shook her head, and quietly set to work, tacking lace into the cuffs and collar of Calla's blue silk dress, and mending her own white opera-cloak—a relic of other days—for Calla's wear.

That party was another first experience to Calla. It was a large gathering where art and literature were more conspicuously represented than fashion and aristocracy. Still there were representatives of everything there; the party was not exclusive, and its various elements were mixed together in what was, on the whole, a very successful *mélée*. There was beauty in the height of the mode flounced, furbelowed, panniered, and polonaised; there was beauty in simple white cashmere made like the drapery of a Greek statue; there was mankind in spotless white ties and gloves, and mankind gloveless and with variegated ties, one even of a bright scarlet, but then he was a genius! There was a crowd and a buzz of voices, and brilliant gas-light streaming from cut-glass chandeliers over pretty dresses and fair faces; and Calla sat in a corner where she had a seat, quite happy, looking on, until one of the daughters of the house turned her attention to the young stranger with the bright, eager, dark eyes and happy, girlish face, and introduced her to two or three people, and drew her into her own select circle.

The select circle, of which Calla now found herself one, were all evidently on intimate terms with each other, and had mutual friends and mutual interests to talk of. They were, however, very kind and cordial to her, especially Miss Tregarne, the only unmarried daughter of the house, and Calla felt herself quite at home and at ease.

Miss Netta Tregarne was not in the least pretty, but she was striking and picturesque; a very pale girl, with abundant hair of reddish gold—a girl without one good feature in her face, but looking as if she had stepped out of a picture, with her perfect dress, somewhat peculiar and quaint in its fashion, her tall elegant figure, colourless white face, and Titian tinted hair.

"It's late in the season for a party, isn't it?" she observed, addressing the circle generally; "but we have been very fortunate in being able to gather all our friends together to-night. When are you going out of town, Louisa? What, not yet for a fortnight? And where are *you* going, Cecil? Up the Rhine? Oh, how delightful! Mr. Grafton is going there too—are not you, Harry? And where are *you* going, Miss Yorke?"

"Nowhere, I think. I've just come back," replied Calla, discovering that she too ought to have had a holiday tour in prospect.

"Is Jacky here to-night?" inquired one of the prospective Rhine tourists.

"Oh, yes. Haven't you seen her? She has caught a Hindoo. Our latest importation—a new acquisition to-night," said Miss Tregarne, glancing across the room at a tall turbaned Eastern bending over the chair of a very animated blonde of the "girl of the period" style.

"Who is he, Netta? Where did you pick him up? Foreigners, particularly dark ones, are very much in my line. You must introduce me," said a young lady, who had been addressed as Louisa.

"No, don't, Netta," interposed Mr. Harry Grafton, a young man remarkable for a wild and self-asserting crop of brown hair, whose luxuriance stood in sad need of a little pruning. "There's no getting a word out of Louisa if she's once introduced to a darkie. You recollect her and that Ashantee fellow? I say, tell us who's here to-night. Any swell strangers?"

"You know almost everybody—at least, everybody who *is* anybody. You don't need me to do guide-book to you."

"I wish somebody would do guide-book to me," put in Calla, catching Miss Tregarne's eye. "I don't know anybody."

Miss Tregarne hereupon turned her attention to Calla very kindly and graciously and ran through a brief list, with commentaries, of the lions of the evening—half-grown lions most of them, who as yet roared softly—reflecting, as she did so, that if she had the superintendence of Calla's toilette she would attire her in something very different to the bright blue silk costume she wore, and "make something of her."

"That is my brother," observed Miss Tregarne, following Calla's eye. "Did you see his picture in the Academy? 'Evangeline?' It was skyed so that nobody could appreciate it. Did you notice it? No? Well, you must have noticed the 'Polar Sunrise.' That was right on the line. That's the artist—Mr. Loftus—with my brother."

The two young artists indicated, being apparently of a similar taste, were both at that moment devoted to a water-nymph looking girl in a shimmering green and white dress, with wild flowers in her long, loose golden hair.

"Who is that young lady?" asked Calla.

"Miss Grace Lee—one of our beauties; do you admire her?"

"Very much!" replied Calla sincerely.

"I must show you some of the other 'bright particular stars' of our constellation. My brother wants to make a series of Shakesperian studies. Miss Lee has already promised to give him a sitting for a study of Ophelia."

"She would make a first-rate Ophelia just as she is," said Calla appreciatively.

"Look at Mrs. Foster—the lady in blue velvet; what a Cleopatra she would make!" continued Miss Tregarne. "And then Miss Ashburnham, the one in white cashmere, with gold cords in her hair. Willy wanted to paint her as Desdemona! I tell him she is not at all the style!—too fine—too noble-looking—too statuesque! Any ordinary, fair, gentle, sweet face would do Desdemona."

"That young lady is too splendid for it, certainly—too tall, too, isn't she?" said Calla.

"Yes. What she reminds one of now, is Tennyson's vision of Iphigenia—'a daughter of the gods, you know, 'divinely tall.'"

"Who's this divine being?" inquired Harry Grafton.

"Ah! Harry, you needn't ask! You rave about her, too, I know. I'm talking of Miss Ashburnham."

"Oh! I thought the 'divinely tall' beauty might be handsome Dick Dorvil! Ladies say he dances 'divinely' I know. If you're pointing out beauties to Miss Yorke, I hope you haven't slighted Dick Dorvil by omitting him?"

"Which is he?—no, don't tell me, let me guess," said Calla, quite interested, before Netta Tregarne, over whose white face a shade of pink had crept, could answer.

Calla surveyed the room, and whether by instinct or critical taste, picked out the specimen of masculine beauty alluded to. There he stood with his arm resting carelessly on the mantel-piece—"handsome Dick Dorvil"—"Flower Dorvil," as some call him from the scarlet flower that always blazes in his button-hole—"Velvet coat," as some strangers have dubbed him from the velvet coat he always wears. He is very handsome, certainly, with his golden curly hair, his dark blue eyes, and his athletic figure.

"A perfect type of the hero of the modern ladies' novel, the blond athlete that we all know so well, isn't he?" observes Harry Grafton, between whom and Dick Dorvil there exists instinctive rivalry, though they have never yet combated in any lists.

Further comments upon the gentleman's appearance are stopped by his making his way up to join the group with another gentleman, whom Netta Tregarne, utterly ignoring Mr. Dorvil, addresses familiarly.

"Well, Jack, have you got your revised proofs in yet?"

"Did you read 'Lucilla Vane,' Miss Yorke?" inquires her friendly hostess, presently, turning to the young stranger in the camp.

"Yes."

"Mr. Lisburne is the author," indicating one of the latest additions to the group; "he has another book just ready; shall I introduce you?"

"Yes, please," replies Calla, simply, and gratified. The introduction is performed, and Miss Tregarne, leaving Mr. Lisburne and Miss Yorke to entertain each other, melts slowly away out of the group in company with Mr. Dorvil.

Mr. Lisburne takes it for granted that Calla has read all the books published by their "circle" and seen and admired all their pictures. She is obliged to shut up a few avenues of conversation by acknowledging that of many of these productions she is ignorant. Nevertheless, they "get on" very well together. Calla is bright and frank and refreshingly simple and girlish; and she smooths the author's plumes by inquiring with sincere interest about his forthcoming book, and talking of "Lucilla Vane" as of a real living acquaintance.

"Slater and Paywell published your book, did they not?" she adds with renewed interest as she recollects the fact, "and they are going to publish a book by a friend of ours, Mr. Felix Grey; have you heard of him?"

"Grey? Ah yes, I remember; Australian fellow, isn't he? Slater thinks well of him. His first book, is it not?"

"Yes; but he has written articles and reviews in newspapers before," replies Calla eagerly, anxious to give her friend his full due.

The information does not, however, go far toward raising Mr. Grey in the estimation of Mr. Lisburne, who, since he has taken to publishing three volumes, rather looks down on journalism; and besides, having met with hostile criticism, regards all reviewers and critics, with one or two personal exceptions, as natural enemies.

He found in Calla such a congenial spirit, that before they parted he had confided to her his grievances on that score, and enlisted her sympathies on his own side as a present, and on that of her friend Felix as probably a future, sufferer from the slings and arrows of criticism.

Calla was delighted with her evening as a child with a new toy. She talked on as if the full flow of chatter would never ebb again about Miss Tregarne's charms and kindness, the people, the conversation, the music, the dresses. The feminine instincts had sprung forth full panoplied as Minerva at last, and she went into raptures about Mrs. Foster's blue velvet, and oh, Miss Lee's *lovely* green and white tulle! "Just the dress in which you would fancy Undine floating about the gardens in her happy days."

"Well, you shall have one like it, my little girl; I mean to have my daughter as well dressed as any of them," said her father good-naturedly.

"Auntie, dear, this is the most eventful summer of my life!" cried Calla enthusiastically. "A new world seems to be opening before me, I feel that I'm standing at the gates of a new path!"

New experiences, new pleasures, new ideas. This year makes mine a new life!"

"Will you forget old friends in new ones, I wonder?" said Mrs. King thoughtfully. "You are just at the age to do so."

"Forget! What, Felix and Isabel, you mean?" exclaimed Calla confidently. "Forget *them*? Never!"

But she was too young yet for any one to hazard a prediction either that she "did protest too much," or that she would be loyal to those early loves which so often drop off like the outer petals whose only use has been to protect and prepare the bud from which they must fall as soon as it blossoms.

Constant or changeful, what eyes were far-seeing enough then to tell which this girl would prove? and who shall say which in this world's ocean endangers most—the Charybdis, Fickleness, or the Scylla, Faith?

CHAPTER VI.

"SO MERE A WOMAN IN HER WAYS."

THREE years have passed since what seemed to her so new a life had dawned on Calla Yorke, and that summer had shone upon her which had seemed the most eventful of all the seasons of her bright youth, whose deepest longings were so easy of fulfilment, whose highest aspirations so easy to attain.

The new life is an old one now, and summers equally happy, if with less of the dazzle of novelty in their brightness, have passed over her head, and ripened, touch by touch, her girlish charms, till now she is a graceful woman instead of a half-developed, overgrown slip of a girl. And still Tom Yorke stays on in London for at least the best part of every year; still when in town he resides in furnished apartments, too inherent a Bohemian to take a house; still wherever he goes his daughter always—and his sister-in-law generally—goes with him; still Calla delights, as vividly as in that first shining season, in society—not society of a fashionable kind, for that has very little to say to the Yorkes or the Yorkes to it—but in the society of that borderland of Bohemia called respectable, but which overlaps the frontiers of Bohemia still. Of this happy land whose delights are only realized by its natives, Calla is counted as one of the favourite princesses now. And a princess of respectable Bohemia finds her crown no burden, and is delightfully free from the cares and duties of royalty elsewhere.

It was Netta Tregarne who first "discovered" Calla Yorke, drew her out, and took her in hand, called the attention of others

to the promise of great loveliness in that girlish face and figure, frankly volunteered hints on her toilette, and finally had the satisfaction of seeing her *protégée* attain to a conspicuous place in the gallery of beauties adored by "the clique."

Mr. Yorke and Mrs. King are proud to see "the child" so popular, and leave her free in perfect faith to follow her way as she lists. Calla has the prudence of instinct, if not of reflection, and a clear-sightedness and penetration that develop as her intellect matures. Added to this she is straightforward even to want of tact, as pure-hearted as she is truthful; and so the trust in her is safely placed. Mrs. King notes with pleasure that she shows no signs of getting "spoilt," though she has developed just vanity enough to make her array herself now to the best advantage. This is a change all for the better. A woman altogether without vanity is like a dinner altogether without salt.

Closely united as Calla has become with "the clique" she loves in London, the new friends have never superseded the old. She has never been unfaithful to the pact of friendship made at La-Basse-Rive: no friends are dearer to her than—nay, none so dear—as the Darrells; she has no companion so beloved as Isabel; and Felix is her favourite friend, hero, and brother. During these three years the Yorkes have only paid two visits to the Château de La-Basse-Rive; but they have seen a great deal of Felix Grey, for he has been in England most of the time, until a few months ago he crossed the Atlantic on a business commission to Chicago, whence he is now, in this June, daily expected back. Calla never leaves home for an hour without intrusting a special message to the servant, "in case Mr. Grey should call." She is quite as fond of Felix as ever, and thinks there is nobody like him for goodness and kindness and cleverness. Although she moves in a circle of which all the male element is more or less attractive, no æsthetic artist, or picturesque author, or Byronic poet, ever succeeds in ousting Felix Grey from his throne. She flirts in a shallow, girlish way with other men; *he* is the friend she trusts and loves. She has a whole pocket-book full of newspaper cuttings, reviews of Mr. Grey's books, or articles by that promising young man, or personal items from the "Varieties" columns of such thrilling interest as, "We understand that Mr. Felix Grey has a new work in press," or, "Mr. Felix Grey will sail for Europe shortly." Calla is harmlessly proud of these marks of distinction enjoyed by Felix, and says frankly she really believes she takes more interest in him than his own sister—which is possibly true.

One day when Felix Grey does return to England and call at the Yorkes', he finds Calla is not at home. She has gone to the Tregarnes' studio for a sitting, as Will Tregarne is taking her portrait. It is the first time Calla has sat for her portrait to an artist, though

she has been photographed several times by the wish of her proud father. The operation of being photographed she regards in much the same light as a visit to the dentist's; but "sitting" for a life-size half-length she enjoys. The very atmosphere of Tregarne's studio is death to dulness; formality flees before it, and ceremony is exiled from its otherwise hospitable walls. If Calla is ever left to wait awhile alone there, she is at home and happy—in spite of a hideous lay-figure with battered and defaced features which might startle a nervous visitor.

Two skulls upon a shelf grin over a bevy of lovely female heads in crayons beneath, with a grim suggestiveness. A large rocking-horse might seem out of place, if *here* anything could seem out of place, and if one did not recollect that Will's last picture but one was a domestic tableau, scene laid in the nursery. Nothing, however, whether ornamental, useful, or the reverse of either, but seems in its fitting place here. There is a stuffed blue macaw, a carriage-wheel, a clothes-horse, a broken boat, a large rock of white coral, and several suits of old armour, which look unfamiliar with the touch of brush or duster.

The floor is not carpeted; but fur rugs and skins of the spotted leopard serve alike as foot-warmers and useful properties. Adjoining the studio proper, and communicating with it by a door, is a room which bears more resemblance to an ordinary sitting-room, possessing carpets, tables, and chairs, and a window instead of a skylight, but whose walls are decorated with half-finished studies and unframed sketches, and which contains two easels, and a banished lay-figure (if exiled on account of its ugliness, certainly its companion in the studio should follow it into exile).

In the studio Will Tregarne reigns supreme; the adjoining room is frequently lent to a friend or occupied by anybody staying in the house. Netta paints there often; and there on this day Mr. Loftus is working at his picture. Netta has been playing propriety to Calla and Will in the studio, but has retired for a few moments' chat with Loftus, and with Miss "Jacky" Hunter who has just called.

Calla occupies a great easy-chair upholstered in sombre green velvet. That sombre green background may be recognized in more than one of the portraits, finished or unfinished, that adorn the room. The fact that it is the most comfortable seat there may be a cause that has something to do with this effect.

Calla has certainly improved wonderfully in beauty during these three years—or it may be that she is less careless of her appearance, and sets herself off to more advantage now that she has left the awkward transition age behind. Her white dress is as simple as it can be, but it fits and flows faultlessly; and the narrow velvet round her neck, the spray of fuchsia drooping from the brooch,

the corresponding flower in her hair, all, even to the frills at her wrists, are arranged with perfect taste. The neglected hair that used to be pushed "anywhere, anywhere out of the way" into a net, is wound round in rich loose graceful coils. It is a change from the careless child of three years ago certainly; but still Calla is not altered a whit, only matured from bud to flower.

"I am getting rather tired of gazing at that skull," she observes meekly, for that cheerful object is the focus on which she is directed to fix her eyes steadily.

"Wait one minute, and then you shall have a rest. You have been very good and patient. Just let me get this curve of the eyebrow right. There! Now, Miss Yorke, wink, blink, move, stretch your arms, only don't knock your flowers awry."

Calla avails herself instantly of the permission. She draws herself erect, and releases her hands from the clasp in which they have begun to feel quite stiff; she tosses back her head and glances round at everything in the room except the skull on which her regards have for the last hour been fixed.

"I believe you contrive a double debt to pay by the focus you have selected for me to stare at," she observes. "You paint my portrait, and you inculcate a moral lesson. 'Take me to my lady's chamber, and tell her to this favour she must come at last!'" she quotes, looking the incarnation of youth and health, and quite unconsciously leaning on the arm of the chair in an attitude more careless and far more graceful than that in which she is being immortalized.

Will Tregarne ignores the remark she utters in his instant appreciation of the turn of her head as she speaks and smiles.

"That's a beautiful pose, Miss Yorke," he exclaims enthusiastically, "keep it a minute, do! Now, if we could seize *that*, I'd begin a smaller sketch in chalks directly. I want a crayon sketch of you. If you'll kindly keep just as you are for a minute, I'll call Loftus in. I want his opinion, I think it's just the thing."

Will Tregarne opens the doors and disappears into the adjoining room, where now there are several voices, some strange, some familiar. Loftus is summoned, but evidently not Loftus alone; the door is flung wider open, and Loftus and Netta and several others enter the studio where Calla Yorke is dutifully preserving the admired pose.

Two of those who enter are bright-eyed Miss Jacky Hunter in a miraculous hat and feathers, and Dick Dorvil, looking, as usual, a perfect bit of colouring, with the red flower in the breast of his brown velvet coat, and his golden hair and much admired complexion. Another is a young man in a grey shooting-jacket, in whose somewhat too slightly built figure and pale, plain face there

is nothing striking or attractive to a stranger's eye, but whose entrance is a delightful surprise to Calla; for it is Felix Grey.

The "beautiful pose" lasts for just one second as her eyes fix on him in glad recognition. Then it is lost for ever (unless chance aid them to find it again), as she springs up and holds out an eager hand of welcome.

"Is it really you? Why, how did you come? When did you come?" she inquires instantly. For Calla is seldom contented to accept it that a thing *is*; she always desires to know how it came to be so.

"I knew you were here. I called at your place first, of course," Felix replies, and the visitors "make a note of" this; but they look discreetly aside, and pretend not to have heard, indeed they profess an unusual absorption in the sketches on the walls. Calla, however, rejoins with a prompt frankness that disarms suspicion and brings their discreet gaze back from the wall ornaments.

"Yes, I should think you *had* called at ours first. You would get into a kettle of hot water if you called on any one else before us."

Then Miss Hunter inquires what kind of a voyage Mr. Grey has had, and does not wait to be answered, but catching sight of Calla's portrait, plunges headlong into a fit of admiration. Then everybody forms in a circle round the portrait, to criticize or admire; and Felix inspects both it and its original narrowly and intently before he expresses any approbation.

The visitors all lounge about the studio, and, being intimates and *habitués*, pull portfolios out of dusty corners, and turn sketches leaning with their faces to the wall round to the light. The time slips away, and there is no further "sitting" that day. But Calla is going to stay to dinner, and Felix Grey takes his *congé*, not without a little secret reluctance, leaving Calla deep in the interpretation of an allegorical sketch, wherein a number of mythical figures appear to be whirling in chaos, which has a deep and subtle meaning, admirably hidden from the world in general. Looking back at the studio door, Felix carries away the picture of Calla and Tregarne holding up this work of art between them, of Dorvil pointing out its beauties with the wrong end of a paint-brush, and of Calla's face turned away from the study of the allegory with a parting smile for him as he looked back.

Felix thought to himself that day, "How splendid Calla is looking! She is a woman now. I wonder how long these *tête-à-tête* sittings last?" And thinking of those *tête-à-tête* sittings, he wished he had found Calla at home. After nearly six months' absence he wanted a quiet talk with his little friend - not to be one of "two or three fellows hanging around talking art small-talk."

He lost no time in paying another visit to the rooms where the

Yorke were now located, and this time found Calla at home alone. Mrs. King and Mr. Yorke were out on business bent.

"Well, now, Calla, tell me all you have been doing with yourself these six months," Felix said, settling himself comfortably in an armchair and looking approvingly round the room and at her as she sat with some light needlework in her hand, fresh, smiling, and bright as morning. "It seems quite jolly and homely to be here with you again," he added with placid enjoyment.

"Yes, isn't it?" she agreed. "I missed you very much the first three months; and then I began to comfort myself. Just as I had got quite reconciled to your absence, you naturally come back," she remarked, with a gay smile.

"I had better have stayed longer, perhaps, if all my friends are as flatteringly indifferent," he said, smiling too.

"I am certainly the most indifferent, and the most unfriendly, and the coldest, and most inconstant of all your host of friends, am I not?" she said, with the prettiest and the sweetest of her playful glances. "Now, Felix, tell me what have you been doing? Have you been writing? and haven't you got anything to show me?"

"You're a witch, Calla! You've looked through my coat into my pocket and seen my manuscript. Yes, I'm trying something in a new line. Worked at it a good deal on the voyage—when it wasn't too shaky to hold a pencil and note-book. I've brought the first act to show you." He pulled a packet of MSS. out of his breast-pocket.

"*Act!* What, a play? Blank verse! Now, Felix, never a tragedy?" exclaimed Calla reproachfully,

"I don't know exactly what it is," he replied, rumpling up his brown hair perplexedly. "It's in five acts, but it's going to end happily."

"Then it's a comedy," she said, decidedly.

"It's *not!*" he rejoined, rather indignantly. "There are two murders in it!"

"Two! Why you are nearly as bad as the 'Old Dramatists,' who never—by the little I know of them—seem to have been content unless they left the stage strewn with corpses."

"*My* people don't both die in the same scene; and another thing I can promise you—they don't 'die standing.' Stage personages are very like that King of France—which was he, by-the-by?—in that respect. They almost invariably die erect, leaning against a column, or very stiffly supported on somebody's arm. It's a curious thing that they don't fall; and nobody has the humanity to lay them down to die quietly. One of mine dies in a cave——"

"And the other on a couch, I suppose?"

"Exactly so. How did you guess?"

"Instinct," laughed Calla. "Well, now, I'll tell you what I've

been doing," she added presently, "You know I had a story—it was only a fairy story—in the 'Children's Joy?'"

"Oh, yes, I know. I want to see it."

"But you're not a child—and it was only for children. Well, but I've done something more than that. It's a secret,"—drawing her chair a little nearer confidentially and mysteriously. "I've always, you know, been beginning things, and I've finished a story at last. It's in eight chapters, and I've made my first venture all by myself. I walked off quietly one day, and took it to Slater and Paywell's Magazine. Auntie knew Mr. Paywell, and so I didn't feel quite strange. But oh, it was such a delicious novelty to me! The office looked very dingy and dusty, and there was only one rickety wooden stool, and I sat on that, and felt rather as if I were going to the dentist's." (By Calla's sparkling eyes and confidently enthusiastic tone of voice one would be bound to believe that the situation she described was just within the gates of Paradise!) "And I sent in my little note, and presently a very benevolent, elderly gentleman appeared. I don't know how I introduced myself, or how I got into the Presence Chamber; but the Presence Chamber was very comfortable indeed——"

"They always are" said Felix parenthetically.

"Arm chairs, and a beautiful *escritoire* with pigeon-holes," continued Calla. "And the old gentleman was very polite and nice, and I left my precious little brown paper parcel; and as I came out, I felt quite pleased that the clerks should see I had left it behind. I should have felt so humiliated if they had seen me carry it out again. Luckily it was so small I could have hidden it under my cloak."

"I wish everybody could enjoy their first venture as much as you seem to have done!" said Felix, with a half-amused, half-tender look in his thoughtful brown eyes. "Well, and what's the upshot of it? Are you accepted?"

"I don't know. It's nearly three weeks ago, and I haven't heard," she replied rather ruefully.

"Oh, that's nothing," he rejoined cheerfully, he having long got past the stage when three weeks' waiting seems an eternity.

Then Mrs. King came in, and was very glad to see Felix, who was a favourite of hers. They made him stay to dinner, and had a merry evening. Mr. Yorke was in the gayest of his buoyant spirits; he and Felix were very good friends; indeed, it was difficult to dislike Felix Grey, and it was impossible to dislike Mr. Yorke, even to those whom his reckless carelessness most annoyed or grieved. Two natures more opposite than these two men's could not have been found, yet the one never judged severely of the other's thoughtless aimlessness, nor the other ever sneer or scoff at the slow, quiet, earnest nature of the first. It may be because, oppo-

site as night and day though their natures were, Pharisaical harshness was equally far from both; their tolerant charity, though springing from different sources—in the one from easy, thoughtless good nature, and in the other, from breadth and freedom of thought—was the one quality they possessed in common.

They talked a great deal about business which Calla did not understand much about nor trouble herself to listen to; there seemed to be "a good deal of America in the business," she thought. She gathered that there was a possibility of her father's finding it necessary to "go over," and that Felix Grey did not seem quite sure about the "safety" of something which was evidently not his own business, but Mr. Yorke's. Mr. Yorke would always listen with most friendly readiness to anything Felix Grey had to say, and was "delighted to receive" any suggestion of his. But Tom Yorke invariably listened to advice, and never was known to take it. Calla never troubled her head by thinking about her father's affairs—past, present, or future. She knew him very well; she loved him even better than she knew him, and, with something of his carelessness, inherited, and softened in her to a buoyant trustfulness, she had the same kind of faith in him that he had in "lucky chances."

It was a different kind of faith to that she held in Felix; one was a superstition that the helmless vessel would drift into port, the other was a confidence that the captain would do his duty, and neither faith could have been shaken in Calla's heart without pouring into her fresh, sweet, trustful nature a drop of bitterness never to be expunged. There is nothing, after all, like the first faith, the first hope, the first allusion; the second fruits may look as fair, and taste as sweet, but the first fresh fragrance and the first pure bloom come back no more.

The days glided on, and meetings between the Yorkes and Felix Grey were, of course, frequent. Besides his morning visits to them, which were not rare, they met at parties, at theatres, at kettle-drums, at those quiet "evenings at home" where you may chance to find only the host and hostess and their family, or you may meet half the world—that is to say, half the "world" of the circle you frequent—a larger or lesser, higher or lower world, as the case may be.

Each circle is fortunately, as a rule, sufficiently well satisfied with its own world not to desire a flight to another sphere. I suppose the worms on each and every cabbage leaf are equally confident theirs is the greenest and most succulent! Intellect looks down on Wealth; Wealth rustles her satin skirts past Intellect with self-contented superiority; Fashion smiles scornfully down on them both from her charmed height; Bohemia laughs in the ceremoniously composed face of Conventionalism, while Conventionalism averts its shocked countenance from Bohemia. "So runs

the world away!" and so we follow our different roads to the goal where all shall meet and harmonize, and leave "circles" and "cliques" behind, in the world where they belong, and which surely would be a very poor tame world without them! as dead level and monotonous as a treeless plain unrelieved by hill or valley.

The Graftons' "Sunday evenings" were an old institution, and it was perhaps to their long-standing and old associations that they owed a great part of their charm. Such gatherings, like brown *beurré* pears, take a good deal of time to mellow, and ripen to their full perfection. The Graftons' gatherings were never very large, for although the list of their friends increased, their rooms were not elastic. One evening in July those rooms were about as full as was endurable on a still and sultry night, when the gaslight felt oppressive and all the ladies were fanning themselves, and all the gentlemen getting near open doors and windows. The Graftons' drawing-room

"had gathered there,
Its beauty and its chivalry,"

in the proportion of about five of the chivalrous sex to one of the beautiful, it happened to be (as it happens more often in Bohemia than in Belgravia). Felix Grey was one of the chivalry, and Calla Yorke was one of the beauty, one of the brightest stars in the small constellation too. For amongst the fair minority only half were young, and of that half only two had a clear claim to beauty. Be it observed, for the credit of the good looks of the circle, that this night the total of ladies young and single only reached to four, the remainder consisting of two genial matrons, who had accompanied their lords, and two literary widows neither young nor fair.

Netta Tregarne was there, faultlessly draped in soft folds of purest white, high to the throat and close to the wrists; and there was a strong-minded looking young lady, with spectacles and a black serge walking dress, stout walking shoes, and short cropped curly hair; and Miss Vanessa Vavasour, a young actress, popular and pretty popular, her depreciators said, on account of her prettiness—who shared with Calla the honours of youth and beauty. The two were well contrasted, Calla in her fresh morning of youth, with courage and purity manifest in every look of her frank dark eyes, and Vanessa Vavasour, with her brilliant blond colouring and witchery of glance of drooping almond-shaped blue eyes, a hot-house trained flower beside the wild white rose of the lanes.

There was handsome Dick Dorvil—there was a sabre-scarred American colonel, the "hero of a hundred fights"; there was Mr. Treves, of Clarence Street celebrity, who had become by this time known to all friends of the Yorkes, and went where they went, and was rather a favourite of Calla's for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne," and who considered himself an artist now, and let his light hair

grow very long, and turned down his collar loosely; and there was a fair, fat, florid gentleman concerning whom Calla whispered confidentially to Felix Grey—

"Do you see that nice young man in the spectacles? He edits the 'Children's Joy,' and I am going over to make myself agreeable to him."

"I should have thought you soared above the 'Children's Joy' now."

"Not a bit! I got four pounds ten for my story. You can't imagine my delight when my first cheque arrived. And I don't think it is at all 'best to be off with the old love before you are on with the new'—not in literature, at least. I mean to be very faithful to the 'Children's Joy,' until I've got my footing safe elsewhere," laughed Calla.

"Mercenary and worldly child!" said Felix; "I suppose if Slater and Paywell's 'first reader' should enter now, you'd forsake that 'nice young man in spectacles' on the spot."

"That would be casting off the 'old love' rather too suddenly, wouldn't it?" she responded. As they stood confidentially, laughing and talking low, the unconscious object of their remarks recognizing Calla for the first time bowed and made his way towards her, while Mrs. Grafton came up to introduce Felix Grey to Miss Vavasour. Felix and Calla looked at each other and smiled as they drifted apart, and they came together no more until the end of the evening.

Calla and her editor got on so well, and she is so successful in her task of being agreeable, that though they got wedged in behind a table between the barriers of stout Mrs. Green on one side, and a pair of tall young men absorbed in argument on the other, they do not find their imprisonment in the least irksome. Still Calla is not too absorbed to lose sight altogether of Felix; she notices how long and how attentively he and Vanessa Vavasour are talking; her eyes follow them when they drift together out of the crowd and into a cosy window recess at the other side of the room, and catch glimpses again and again of Vanessa seated leaning back gracefully, and of Felix bending over her and fanning her with her mother-of-pearl fan.

When refreshments are brought in, there is a general breaking up of the separate groups and concentration on that side of the folding doors where the wine and biscuits and ham sandwiches form a focus of attraction. Still Felix and Vanessa Vavasour are laughing and talking together, and Calla hears her saying trustingly,

"Of course you are coming to see me in 'The Hunchback' next week? I shall count on seeing you." And Netta, passing, whispers

to Calla with a glance at Vanessa, whom she does not like, "Another victim!"

Mr. Goodchild is still by Calla's side, mixing her a glass of wine and water; Treves is at her other hand with his own hands full of offerings—plates of sandwiches and cakes. She is enjoying herself very much—but she wishes Felix were in Treves's place. The gentlemen are all beginning to smoke now; the ladies have all protested they don't mind it in the least, and Vanessa Vavasour is confiding to Felix Grey, in a charmingly soft and coquettish whisper, something in which a word like "cigarette" is just audible. Some people are generously offering cigar-cases round; some pull out pipes, republican clays, or aristocratic and beautifully-coloured meerschaums.

Everybody sits down and begins to look very happy and peaceful; a faint haze of graceful curls of vapour begins to dim the atmosphere and mellow the too-brilliant gas-light; Harry Grafton and Jack Lisburne are exchanging confidences over a pocket-book in a retired corner; Dick Dorvil is leading a discussion upon the censorship of the drama; Miss Vavasour has sunk down on a footstool, settling her silken drapery gracefully round her and devoting her transferred attention to Mr. Goodchild; and Felix takes up his place by Calla's side again. She welcomes him with a smile that is frankly glad and only ever so little coquettish.

"It is quite evident you are writing a play! I should have guessed it if you hadn't told me. You mean business, I see. She'll make a lovely Ermengilda, won't she?" are Calla's first words, gaily whispered, with a half-glance in the direction of Miss Vavasour.

"Not in the least Ermengilda," he replies, earnestly, taking the remark *au sérieux*. "I dare say she could look it, and dress it; she could *look* anything; but she couldn't *play* it," continues Felix, who is possibly singular enough to have an exaggerated idea of the magnificence of his heroine's character.

"She could dress it, I dare say! But *I* don't think she could *look* it," observes Calla, with an air of impartial criticism.

"Features not quite classic enough, perhaps," assents Felix, with a glance at Calla's broad, fair brow and regular profile. "I haven't been able to get near *you* all the evening," he continues, as if complaining of a just grievance.

"Did you ever try?" she asks, with a mischievous smile.

"Well, perhaps not," he laughingly admits; "but I should have tried if you hadn't been so heart-and-soul absorbed with that fellow all the time. I saw there was no room for me; and I don't like going shares."

"One *must* be agreeable to one's editor, mustn't one?" she responds, with a brief, bright up-look from under her long, dark

lashes, and a perceptible but unaccountable deepening of the colour on her cheek. Why should she blush at anything Felix Grey may say? They are such old friends! and this is the first time the rose has glowed on her face because his eyes were fixed on it.

"What are you thinking about so solemnly Felix?" she asks, half-playfully, half-curiously.

If Felix had answered the very truth, he might have said, "Wondering whether you were blushing about that fellow or not!" He replied something very close to the truth, in fact it was true, though not the whole truth, in replying,

"Thinking how changed you are, since first I knew you—since the day I found you sitting reading Shakespeare on the leads!" he added, with a smile.

"In an old, dusty, brown dress not many degrees removed from rags and tatters," she rejoined, "which I hadn't even the grace to be ashamed of! I have altered in one thing, certainly. I shouldn't deem myself fit for the reception of visitors in such a costume now. But have I really changed much?"

"I think you have."

"For the worse, I suppose?"

"You know better than that, Calla; don't fish for compliments!"

"It would be no use to fish them from *you*; you never pay me any!"

"No, I don't think I ever did," Felix admitted meditatively. "We are too old friends for compliments, aren't we, Calla? And you get enough of them elsewhere?" He looked at her interrogatively, waited a moment for an answer, and then added, "don't you?"

A gleam of mischief sparkled in her eye as she replied demurely, "Oh yes, plenty!"

Felix tried to look pleased, but somehow failed. Calla perceived one of her artistic admirers steering his way across the room towards her, and knew that her *tête-à-tête* with Felix would speedily be broken up.

"Whatever else I may have altered in," she said, with a sudden change of tone, lowering her voice and looking up at him with her old frank sweetness, "I have never changed in one thing; I am always the same to my old friends—to *you*."

CHAPTER VII.

"THROUGH ALL TURNS OF FATE THAT FACE TO FOLLOW."

A LONDON back-garden is not the most pleasant lounging place in the world, especially when it is only about fifteen feet square;

and overlooked by all the back-windows of the entire length of two streets. But the Yorkes have a wonderful faculty of making themselves comfortable under any circumstances, and utilizing the unpromising material for their pleasures. They often like to spend these warm summer evenings in the open air without taking the trouble to dress and walk as far as the park, and by stepping out of a glass door on the ground floor of their present abode they can indulge in all the enjoyment afforded by fresh air, only a trifle smoked, sunshine and sunset, fifteen square feet of gravelled land, three lilac bushes, a lime-tree, and about as much green turf as you would put in a skylark's cage. With this attainable luxury at their own doors, they frequently content themselves, and loiter there placidly as if never to wander more.

There they are sitting, Felix, Calla, and Mr. Yorke, all three sublimely indifferent to the numberless back windows, from garret to basement, that command their position, and the countless critical eyes that may or may not be bent upon them from behind those fluttering white curtains or discreetly closed Venetian blinds. There is a young woman in the attic next door but one who has thrust herself half out of the window and knocked her coquettish cap awry in her interest in watching them; there is a parrot next door, whose cage is hung out to catch the warmth of sunset, and who is courtesying up and down in his ring with his head cocked on one side and his yellow-circled eyes fixed on them as he repeats over and over again, "Polly sees you." Mrs. King is in doors, not delighting in the publicity of the so-called "garden," and preferring the comfortable seclusion of her easy chair.

Perhaps in reality three lilac bushes cast shadow enough for three people to enjoy; the drooping lime leaves and the little square of turf smell fresh and sweet; and the floating streaks of sunset cloud could not have been more royally dyed in gold and purple if they had been viewed from solitary hill-top, or sea-shore, or grassy valley, instead of from a little strip of cockney garden.

The trio have brought out chairs and a little table; Calla is reading by the fast-fading day-light—reading some of her aunt's proof-sheets, playing at being very busy revising them, nibbling the end of a pencil abstractedly, and now and then with a little air of importance making a hieroglyphical mark or two on the margin. Felix and Mr. Yorke are talking as usual.

Felix Grey belongs to the numerous and ever-increasing class of young men with theories. He has theories political, theories social, theories religious. Some of them are heterodox enough, but he is not one of those theorists who are given to startling their friends: his friends, indeed, are seldom surprised or taken aback by his doctrines, simply because there is a sort of transparent singleness and tenacity about him that renders the tone of his mind easy to learn,

so that those who know him well are able, as a rule, to divine what manner of view he will be likely to take of any given subject.

This evening he and Tom Yorke have been holding forth alternately upon Darwinism, natural selection, the law of primogeniture, parental authority, and marriage, taking characteristically opposite views on most of these subjects. Felix is very strong on the duty of celibacy in those families afflicted by any hereditary malady. It is a pet theory of his; he never waxes warm, but he waxes decidedly emphatic, in his assertion that—

“A man has no business to marry and entail any mental or physical suffering on posterity. We owe a duty to the future as well as to the past.”

“Ah, it’s easy to lay down the law as to what human nature *ought* to do, my dear boy,” says Tom Yorke—“not so easy to drive it into the path it ought to tread.”

“Not easy, perhaps. But difficulties were made to be mastered.”

“There are some difficulties you can clear easily enough in theory that you can’t jump over in practice. Perhaps it is well that our principles should be a little above us. I’m very sure there are some standards that we keep merely as a fine show—and they do look superb; but poor human nature couldn’t strain up to their level if it would, and probably wouldn’t if it could.”

“When we wouldn’t if we could, it’s well enough. That’s straightforward. There’s no paltering with a double sense in that. But to my mind there’s no more contemptible cowardice in the world.” rejoins Felix, who uses strong language sometimes, “than that common one which lets a wide gulf gape between the principle and the act—keeps the will and the word on one side and leaves the deed on the other.”

“Ah, Felix, my boy,” says Mr. Yorke sentimentally, watching a slow curl of smoke float up from his cigar, “when the depths of human affections and passions make up the breadth of the gulf—well, it takes something more than mortal to bridge it over, and bring the word and the deed together.”

“I can’t see it,” responds Felix. “When there’s a contest between love and strong resolve in any human heart, if love gets the better, it does not seem to me to prove so much the strength of the feeling as the weakness of the will. That weakness, of course, seeks its own excuse by pleading the other’s strength. But I don’t see how a strong feeling can grow from a weak nature, or how it is possible that from a strong and self-contained nature there can develop any one feeling so strong itself as to overbalance and conquer the very forces and power from which it drew its own. Strong love, strong will; but loves come and go, and will endures.”

Calla lays down her pencil, which has been idle for some minutes, and strikes in, in her light, clear tone:

"I don't mean to flatter your argument, Felix, but it strikes me—as I read somewhere—that

'Thou lovest not who reasonest so well!'"

"Aha, I think she's got you there!" says the fond father. "Comes in very pat, that, eh? *Thou lovest not!*"

"Well, perhaps I am not an affectionate nature," Felix pleads guilty, smiling.

"Ah, come, Master Felix," said Tom Yorke jocularly, with a knowing air. "I should like to be your father-confessor. It would be interesting to know the where, when, and how of every fellow's first love," he continues. "Whatever else one forgets, one never forgets that. 'When I was ten years old I was in love with a little girl who used to sit in the next pew at church.'"

"That was beginning early, papa, wasn't it?" says Calla.

"And I was faithful for three years," he responds. "When I was thirteen I fell down fathoms and fathoms deeper in love with a young lady at a pastrycook's. I'm afraid she must have been nearer thirty than twenty, looking back at her with sober, disenchanted eyes. But, good heavens! to me she was Venus and all the sirens rolled into one. The bills I ran up for tarts! I soon ran through my ready money. I wonder I didn't ruin my constitution with that tough pastry, that used to seem to me to be flavoured with nectar."

"Was *your* first love anything in the sweetstuff line, Felix?" inquires Calla gaily; "there seems a certain appropriateness in such a choice!"

"There does," Felix agrees. "I wonder if the association of jam and peppermint rock with the presiding genius of the counter has anything to do with the boys' prevalent tendency to select her as the object of their adoration? It might be convenient, if the lady were willing, to accept love instead of money, which she generally isn't!"

But he does not answer Calla's question; he volunteers no responsive confidence whatever about his loves, whether first, second, or third. His silence on the point piques and tantalizes Calla, she does not know why. A sense of irritating curiosity stings her; she feels an involuntary and unreasonable antagonism towards unknown possible loves of Felix's. She is vexed that their conversation is interrupted here by Mrs. King's calling her.

"Calla dear, come in, I want you a minute."

"What's up, auntie? Nothing wrong, is there?" says Calla, seeing that Mrs. King has a letter in her hand.

"Nothing that need trouble you, dear. But I am afraid I shall have to go to Scotland. Alice is much worse. You see what her husband says at her dictation," and she handed the letter to Calla.

"Alice" was Calla's other aunt, Mrs. King's sister, who had shared with her the care of Tom Yorke's child when he first left England, until some few years ago she had married late in life, and gone to settle in the north of Scotland. She had been ailing for some time, and was now so seriously ill, that—although not believed to be in actual danger—she entreated her sister to come and care for her, and attend to her house during her illness, from which the doctors held out no hope of recovery under several months. She was lonely and distressed, and called on her sister for the help which Mrs. King, of course, was glad to be able to give, although she was sorry to leave Calla, and Calla was equally grieved at having to part with her aunt. Still, as the girl was now no longer dependent solely on her, but safe and happy in her father's care, Mrs. King had no reason to withhold herself from the duty of complying with her sister's request.

"And it is only for a few months, dear child," she said. "Directly Alice is better I shall either return to you, or, perhaps, when the most anxious time of her illness is over, you might come up to Scotland and stay with us. So you see it is not for long we have to say good-bye."

And with this parting assurance on her lips, Mrs. King kissed Calla and took her place in the railway-carriage, and the "Flying Scotchman" snorted and shrieked and tore off on its nightly journey, and arrived safely at its destination without the smallest disaster—a consummation which, if railway accidents continue in their present ratio, will soon come to be a fact worth chronicling.

It is true that

"Sorrows come not as single spies,
But in battalions."

It is sometimes equally true of circumstances that do not come under the category of sorrows. Just as History repeats itself, and the same action takes place age after age on a different field, so in private families sometimes it is curious to note how incidents happen in sequence. It is often observed plaintively "how difficult it is to get out of mourning when once you are in it!" And not only deaths, but such minor calamities as partings, journeys, engagements and marriages, often seem suddenly to become epidemic.

Thus it happened that a very few days after Mrs. King's northward migration, Mr. Yorke came home one afternoon with an air of absorption and of as much excitement as was consistent with his usual *sans-souci*, and finding Calla seated quietly at work, flung himself into a chair, smiling, and commenced the conversation by a simple observation that nevertheless caused Calla's eyes to open in surprised attention.

"I want to talk with you, Calla,

She pushed away her needle-work across the table, and turned to

him and crossed her hands in her lap, alertly, brightly, intently ready to listen.

"Of course I've always been going back to America *some day*," began Tom Yorke. "And now I think that *some day* has come. I'm going back on a commission that I think will turn out a good thing—take up about six months or so—maybe a little more. It will take me to most of the big cities—from East to West. Now, Calla, what's to be done with you? There are your aunts in Scotland; will you go to them? or would you like to come with me?"

The question suffused Calla's cheeks with sudden crimson and fairly took her breath away. She was too startled to know whether the agitation she felt was of pleasure or pain.

"Just as you like, papa dear," she said falteringly.

Mr. Yorke looked at her with keen affectionate scrutiny.

"What do *you* think about it, little girl?" he said. "It's not for long, you know. I'd be back with you before eight months are out. You would rather stay this side of the Atlantic—is that so?"

He had studied his daughter's face very critically, and his penetrating eyes read her better than she knew herself; for his instincts and perceptions were keen, if in what is called "reflection" he was deficient.

"I—I—might be a trouble to you, papa, I'm afraid. I wish you would entirely decide for me."

Her bosom heaved, and tears came into her eyes, which she would have been utterly at a loss to explain.

"Well—well," said her father kindly, "we will see. There's time enough. I mayn't go for a couple of weeks. We'll see, Calla, and we won't hurry ourselves in seeing. There's no hurry to decide immediately."

They were going to the theatre that night; it was a night to which Calla had been eagerly looking forward, the night on which Miss Vanessa Vavasour was to play Helen in "The Hunchback" for a benefit. And Felix had said, "Everybody will be there!"

"Shall you?" Calla had asked.

"Oh, I—of course."

Now the evening has come, and the theatre is full, and Calla, looking pale and thoughtful, but charming in her white dress and pink opera cloak, sits in the stalls, quite unconscious of being the focus of the opera-glasses of a box-full of young men who are looking out for beauties. She is unaccountably agitated and depressed and annoyed with herself. She does not know what she wishes. She loves her father; she loves change and travelling; and any nervousness or fear of a ten days' voyage is as utterly unknown to her as fear or "nerves" of any kind have ever been. And if travelling of any kind is pleasant to her, how far more than merely pleasant would it be to see America, the land where her father had

spent so many years—where Felix Grey had lived—and with which, through father and friend, she always feels familiar.

Then how is it that she does not catch delightedly at the idea?—why does she feel this uncertainty and agitation?—she asks herself impatiently and wonderingly. Surely she must be foolishly over-excited; to-morrow she will be calm, and then will no doubt wish to go with her father, and look back surprised to her present strange reluctance, and wonder how for a moment she could have hesitated. And he, that dear father! how good he is! how tenderly and kindly he leaves her free to make her choice, implying that whatever course she elects to take will be not only good, but best! Yes, to-morrow she will be calm and will talk it over with him and decide.

But now, this is to-night, and she is glancing round the theatre watchfully; and as she sees familiar figure after figure file into the stalls or appear in front of the boxes, and still catches no glimpse of Felix Grey, she is thinking, with a pang that makes her catch her breath with a sigh, "How far, how far off, America is! a whole half-world away! how sad it would be to feel herself so far from the city that was her home! what, without friendship and sympathy, without home and friends, would the delights of change be worth? and would even her father's society prove all-in-all to her in the absence of home and friends—and Felix?"

If only Felix had not returned last month from Chicago her feelings might have been very different. This great *if* Calla rather feels than thinks; but it is in her mind an unwonted consciousness. Not one thing alone, but *everything* would be different to her, if Felix were on the other side of the Atlantic still. Now the overture is nearly done, and the house is nearly filled. Mr. Yorke is enjoying himself very much, recognizing friends to the right and left, and marking time and tune silently on his knee. The Tregarnes are in a box, Will and Netta in the front, as the ornamental division of the family, and the elder members like shadows behind the curtains. Dick Dorvil has got a book of the words, and is marking passages "to be looked out for" with a lead pencil. There are

"Critics to right of them,
Critics to left of them,
Critics behind them."

whose "power of volleying and thundering" will be made manifest ere long. Mr. Treves, in the pit, is pointing out beauties and celebrities to a friend, and indicating Netta Tregarne and Calla Yorke as especial friends of his.

The curtain moves a little; somebody is peeping round, probably to judge of the house.

"Whose is the mysterious eye that is invariably seen glaring through a chink of the curtain?" speculates Calla, who is not so

absorbed in her own thoughts as to ignore everything passing around her—who, indeed, is sufficiently awake to have bowed to everybody she knows, and inspected and criticised several people she does not know. Just as the curtain rises a party are coming into one of the stage boxes; she turns her attention to them and recognizes them. It is Felix at last—Felix, in company with three other gentlemen who represent respectively, Art, Literature and the Drama.

Calla's heart flutters a little with relief and satisfaction; and she settles herself luxuriously in her stall with a little sigh of preparatory enjoyment and resolution to put all thoughts of her own affairs away for the present.

The play goes well. The Julia of the night off the stage is not a beauty; but to-night, in the yellow glare of the gas-light, she looks not only pretty, but quite incredibly and startlingly ingenuous and innocent; and the audience do not inquire how much of her complexion and her expression is put on with her costume. Clifford makes love as naturally as is possible under the circumstances; and Helen—bright, blonde Vanessa Vavasour—is, thus far, more interesting than sentimental Julia.

After the first act there is a general exodus from the box where Felix is, not that this box is at all singular in that. The box people have come down from their eminence to speak to their friends in the stalls; the stalls have gone up to visit the boxes; the lobbies are full. Mr. Yorke has gone up to speak to the Tregarnes; and Calla waits alone—looking for Felix to come. However, it is not Felix who comes to her, it is Dick Dorvil who bends his six feet of height gracefully, and leans on the back of an adjoining stall as he talks to her. The only remark of his in which she takes any interest, and the only one which she passes over with professed indifference, is to the effect that "Grey and Howell are behind the scenes."

The interval between the acts is over; and everybody is hurrying back to their own places; and Mr. Yorke is back by Calla's side, and Felix Grey and his friend do not make their appearance until the curtain has risen. Standing in front of the box, he smiles at Calla, and she returns the smile. Their relation is too frank and friendly, and her nature too candid and naïve, for pretences of not seeing and assumptions of looking in opposite directions. And after the second act, Felix makes his way to the Yorkes; and they exchange a few words, and praise Helen and criticise Clifford; and after the third act he comes again.

By this time Calla had been melted to tears—an unusual weakness on her part, but this night she is overstrung and excited—and has surreptitiously dried her eyes behind her fan; and her bright eyes are looking liquidly lustrous and soft as she raises them to look at his.

And this time, while Felix leans with folded arms over the back of a vacant stall, and looks at Calla and talks to her father, Mr. Yorke tells Felix of his intended journey. And the very first remark that Felix makes is—

“What are you going to do with Calla?”

“I haven’t quite made up my mind yet. It would scarcely be well, perhaps, to take a young girl roughing it and drifting about with me. Her Aunt Sarah is in Scotland, you see. I don’t quite know yet about taking Calla or leaving her.”

“If you do leave her, let her come and stay with us,” observed Felix, with some eagerness. “She is to come to us for a month this summer, you know; it will only be lengthening her visit awhile, if you’ll let her stay with us while you are away.”

Calla knew her own wishes clearly and suddenly now; a new light was turned upon her mind that chased away all the wavering shadows of uncertainty. A bright half-tremulous smile flashed over her face, and a new light sparkled in her eyes, as she looked up at Felix; and the colour rose softly and suffused her cheeks to their deepest crimson. She opened her lips to speak, but changed, and looked at her father and was silent, and bent her head, feeling the blush burn to her very brow. He had read and rightly interpreted the unconscious betrayal of his daughter’s face, and was looking at her kindly, and more thoughtfully than usual.

“It wouldn’t do for this little girl to be rushing about travelling day and night half over the world, I think. There’s time enough for her to travel, and I sha’n’t be long gone. Perhaps she had better stay quiet with some kind friends here.”

And although nothing more was said upon the subject then, they all felt and knew that it was, or soon would be, so decided, and that Calla would be left, at least, for a time, under Mrs. Darrell’s care.

The drop-scene drew up again; the fifth act began; and Felix Grey hurried out of the stalls, crushing himself nearly flat in his amiable eagerness to get past without crushing the ladies’ dresses or treading on their toes. Calla enjoyed the last act, and wept over it; and when Felix threw a big bouquet to Vanessa Varasour, Calla felt no objection, and indeed was proud alike of his courtesy, his dramatic appreciation, and his skilful aim being thus manifested in public. And when they met in the lobby, and were borne along together with the crowd down the stairs, it was of the play they talked, of Miss Vavasour; of the various Helens they had seen or had not seen; and of the proposed plans for the remainder of the summer they only spoke a few words.

But Calla was glad and gay; she had no idea herself of the reason why her heart was fluttering so excitedly and happily; she could only have explained it by the facts that she loved the theatre

and music and gaiety, and had enjoyed her evening. She would have been horror-stricken and angry had any one suggested to her that a plan which comprised a separation between her and her father could cause her this light-hearted buoyant exhilaration of spirit. She only knew that by a sudden reaction her spirits had risen brightly to their gayest height. She laughed as she caught up her trailing white dress and gathered her opera-cloak round her, and followed Felix and her father along the pavement in search of a cab, jostled by the hurrying crowd around the theatre's entrance; and the last Felix saw of her that evening was the bright flushed face smiling a gay good-night out of one window of the dingy four-wheeler, while Tom Yorke thrust half his portly person out of the other window, and shouted directions to the cabman. Felix himself felt that "His bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne!" and scattered some loose silver among the little street Arabs who were darting under the horses' heels and dodging in between the vehicles in search of a respondent to their offers of "Cab, sir?" "Cab, ma'am?"

The decision that had been virtually, though tacitly and suddenly arrived at, in a few words between the acts of the play that evening, was not very likely to be reversed. If Felix had not spoken those few words that night bending over Calla's seat in the stalls, if Mr. Yorke had not happened to notice his daughter's look at that moment, the morrow—when Calla and her father were to have "talked it over"—might have decided otherwise. But as it was, a half-dozen words, a flush, a smile,—and it was fixed—(as more important things have been fixed as fate ere now by a smile and a blush)—that while seas would roll between Calla and her father she was not to be parted from those her dearest friends, and that on his roving and adventurous wanderings (which perhaps were scarcely of the kind it is best for a young girl to share), Tom Yorke would go alone.

BOOK III.

“WE ARE IN LOVE’S LAND TO-DAY.”

“I see my Oread coming down—
 O this is the day!
 O beautiful creature! what am I
 That I dare to look her way?
 Think I may hold dominion sweet,
 Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast,
 And dream of her beauty with tender dread.
 “My bride to be, my evermore delight,
 My own heart’s heart, and ownest own farewell,
 It is but for a little space I go!”

TENNYSON—*Maud*.



CHAPTER VIII.

“RED NOON OF LOVE, AND LIFE AND SUN.”

CALLA had more than one offer of a temporary home during her father’s absence. The Tregarnes invited her to stay “at least part of the time” with them. Mrs. King wrote to ask if she would come to Scotland, but added that, as it was an invalid house, it might prove rather dull and depressing for a bright-spirited girl. Mrs. Darrell and Isabel united in an affectionate and cordial invitation; and, it need scarcely be said, that this latter was the one which was accepted.

A sojourn at “the dear old Château” was a delightful prospect to Calla, even though Felix would not be there all the time. His present occupation on a weekly paper would necessitate his being in London a great deal, but he would run over to La Basse-Rive as often as he could, and that would, *should* be, often enough.

As Calla sagely observed to herself, in her bright content with the world in general, and her own lot in particular, “It would be quite too much of a good thing to have Felix there every day and all day long! And even when he is not there, it is his home, and there are dear Mrs. Darrell and Isabel.”

It was agreed that as soon as Mr. Yorke should have been duly “seen off” at the railway station—and on this seeing off Calla especially insisted, and would have travelled down to Liverpool to

extend it even to the departure of the vessel if her father had approved of the idea. As soon, then, as he had been seen off, Felix was to escort Calla over to the Château, where he himself would spend a few weeks, his summer holiday.

So Felix and Calla drove with Mr. Yorke to the station, and saw the old American trunk labelled in one of the few spots left uncovered by defaced labels from almost every civilized city on the face of the globe, and fortified themselves against the approaching party by effervescing glasses of iced lemonade in the refreshment-room, and bought sandwiches which Calla, now at the last moment getting lachrymose, packed tearfully in her father's bag. She also invested, as a parting offering, in various comic periodicals, which she thrust affectionately into his breast pocket, blinking and dropping a tear on "Punch's" pictured dog Toby.

"Well, good-bye, Felix, my boy, take care of my little girl! With your mother and you, I shall feel she's in good hands."

"You may trust her to us," responded Felix warmly, and then added on impulse, as the bell rang and the parting moment had come, "You'd trust her to us—to us all—for longer than a mere few months' visit, wouldn't you?"

"I think I would, old fellow," said Tom Yorke, and wrung his hand.

Calla winked away her tears disconsolately as she watched the train rush and roar away in a wreath of smoke; but she was smiling gaily enough, when an hour or two afterwards, Felix and she took the train that carried them on the first stage of their journey to La Basse-Rive.

There was no one like Felix for cheering and comforting, no one like him for picturing, in the very hour of parting, the meeting that would grow out of that separation, and drawing through a telescope the bright things of the future near.

So by the time they were in the train, Calla was happy, and enjoyed her journey as much perhaps as that delightful first journey on the same line to the same goal three years ago. As much, and yet differently! Who shall draw a comparison between the two happiest seasons of a life and say "This is the brightest"?! Who shall weigh in the balance one joy against another and decide rationally how the scale turns?

Of that happy first journey they spoke this time, and so lived it over again mile by mile that the two pleasures seemed blended into one.

It was a mild early August evening when they reached the Château de la Basse-Rive; the dogs barked, and the great gates creaked on their hinges as they rolled back to admit the carriage, just as of old.

Mr. and Mrs. Darrell stood on the threshold, and Isabel's pretty

white-robed figure came fluttering down the steps to welcome the arrival. *Cocher* smiled sympathetically at the meeting as he pocketed his *pour-boire*.

"*Merci, monsieur—merci, madame*," he said to the two travellers, whereat Calla blushed and Isabel laughed.

How delightful Calla felt it to be to deposit her bags and baskets and herself on the stiff straight-backed velvet sofa in the dear old *salon* again! to see Marie-Rose in her flapping white cap bustle in with a tray of cakes and wine, while Claudine, successor to Fanchette, seized and bore off the bags. Calla felt she was at home instantly—at a real and beloved home, after an absence just long enough to endear it to her the more.

Isabel was tranquilly delighted to have Calla with her again; Mr. Darrell patted her head paternally with unusual demonstration; and Mrs. Darrell, as she bade her good night, said, with a calmly maternal look in her beautiful serene eyes,

"It is a real pleasure to us to have you here, dear child. You are my other daughter, you know."

Mrs. Darrell would not have so innocently added the last part of this remark if she had noticed Felix and Calla as watchfully that evening as she did the following day. That night she uttered those words in all simplicity and in affectionate hospitality. But the next evening an idea was dawning in her mind that those unconscious words spoken at random might have hit near a truth of which Calla herself was yet unconscious. And, as the days wore on, this idea became a certainty.

Mrs. Darrell had not seen Felix and Calla together for many months; and now she saw plainly that the girl had become a woman, and that the friendship between those two, begun when the girl was scarcely more than a child, was now, that she was in the full bloom and glory of early womanhood, daily deepening and warming into something dearer, closer, sweeter than friendship.

She read the story in Calla's face, in a new-born shyness and softness, a dawning light of happiness other and deeper than mere girlish gaiety, a warmer colouring of coming and going blushes; she read it in Felix's large brown eyes—the one beauty he had inherited from his mother—which brightened when they fixed on Calla's face. The atmosphere of an undeclared love, slowly ripening towards its acknowledgment, clung about these two, and haloed them with a tender sacred light.

All the circle began to perceive it soon, though the mother's eyes saw keenest and first, and on her the conviction came swift and strong at once, although she never gave it words, even to her husband, for there was little expansiveness of confidence between Mr. and Mrs. Darrell, their reticence springing, probably, less from lack of affection than from natural and mutual reserve.

"The course of true love" seemed in this instance very likely to "run smooth." It was not "misgrafted in respect of years:" there was, if the language of eyes and blushes is to be trusted, a perfect "sympathy in choice." "War, death, and sickness" seemed as far from it as the shadows of night from noonday; and if "it stood upon the choice of friends," there was no apparent reason for anticipating obstacles in that channel.

The Darrells were fond of Calla, and Mr. Yorke liked Felix; and even the worst enemies of the two families could not have accused either of worldliness or of mercenary views on marriage. While yet no word even hinting at a mutual love had been spoken, of course there could be only vague and half-defined and altogether unexpressed sentiments on the part of the lookers on. But they felt that this transition state of things could not last, and that, sooner or later, the hour would come when the veil must be torn down, and the two that day by day were silently, unconsciously growing nearer together, must meet and mingle in the perfect comprehension of mutual love.

Meanwhile, Calla was absolutely happy, and never looked beyond the happy present. The bright running river of her life seemed just now to be resting in a lovely calm inlet, still as a lake, smiling in golden sunlight, with folded water-lilies dreamily floating on the placid bosom of the water—the smiling, sleeping water that heard no murmur from the sea that lay beyond, and caught no sound of the dashing spray and the surf of the far-off breakers to which the fairest river runs.

So her bright, calm life lay still in its peaceful present, and she took no thought for the morrow, even in hope, for hope was just now as the very atmosphere of her life, and its unnamed presence pervaded all, while she was no more conscious of it than of the air she breathed.

She loved La Basse-Rive with a mingling of the tenderness with which we regard our old home, the delight with which we revel in the beautiful and new. She liked its very drawbacks, and in her exuberant spirits and healthy youth, she drew an inexhaustible fund of entertainment from its inconveniences. She appeared to enjoy the occasion, when one day, owing to an oversight and a domestic misunderstanding, dinner was left entirely to the imagination, and an extemporized substitute, called supper, consisted chiefly of toast and tarts; she rejoiced aloud when, another day, there was discovered to be a dearth of candles and an utter deficiency of oil in the establishment, and they had to spend the evening in the dark, reserving the two relics of wax candle for the hour of retiring.

Felix, Calla, and Isabel read the sunny mornings away on the sands, made up impromptu pic-nics in the woods, and broke loose from all fetters like children let out on a holiday; they kept no

hours, or, rather, kept all varieties of hours, returned to dinner early or late, and to *déjeuner* often not at all, supplying the place of that meal by biscuits and sandwiches, partaken of at intervals. Mr. Darrell let the young people go their way. So long as they did not sing or play when he was writing, and left his sanctum sacred, his equanimity was undisturbed; he only wished to see them happy.

Only over Mrs. Darrell the shadow of sadness always seemed to brood. Her presence, always a pleasant and soothing one, with something sympathetic and charming in its very quietude, was not an atmosphere of strength and brightness. It was the sweet warm southern breeze of a summer evening, not the bracing of the "Brave north-easter!" And at this time the contemplation of all this young hope and happiness in the air around her never seemed to lift and lighten her spirits. Indeed it was perhaps chiefly by contrast with their brightness that the shadow over *her*, slight, silent, and so unvarying that it passed unnoticed, seemed more perceptible now.

"Mamma, dear, does your head ache this morning?" asked Isabel, as Mrs. Darrell stood on the threshold of the long open window, looking out into the garden where Felix and Calla were taking a long time and making a great business about filling a small epergne with flowers.

"No, dear; why?"

"You don't look well," said her daughter, whose soft observant eyes had noted that Mrs. Darrell's cheek was unusually pale and her face full of a sadness that was almost pain. "Is there anything the matter?"

"Nothing, dear child."

"No tiresome letters this morning?" pursued Isabel.

"Letters? no!" replied Mrs. Darrell quickly, "what letters should there be? How inquisitive you are, Bell! If there were anything of the smallest interest, should I not have told you?"

"Yes, mother darling, of course. And of course I am inquisitive if I think anything is worrying you," Isabel said with gentle tenacity, stroking her mother's hand.

"My darling, there is nothing," Mrs. Darrell answered affectionately, drawing Isabel to her side, and leaning her cheek against her daughter's fair head so that Isabel could not look up in her face, so clouded with an anguish of tenderness and yearning and pain.

"I wish, dear," added Mrs. Darrell placidly, after a moment's pause, "that you and Calla would run down to the farm for a dozen eggs and bring a little flour from the mill. Marie-Rose is very forgetful. She has been so stupid this morning. French servants are really a trial."

"We will go directly," replied Isabel. "Calla must have got flowers enough for two epergnes by this time. I am sure."

"Don't hurry, my sweet one; my little girl must not walk fast

in the sun!" said Mrs. Darrell caressingly. Isabel was the only creature in the world to whom she ever was demonstrative, the only creature on whom she lavished caresses, the only one she ever called by tender epithets and fond diminutives, and even to her such demonstrations were rare. She kissed her now with unusual tenderness, and smiled, and kept the smile on bravely till Isabel had turned away. Then the forced lines of her face relaxed suddenly, and the whole expression changed and drooped, and a look of hopeless pain filled her eyes, as she watched Isabel cross the lawn to Felix and Calla, and heard the light laughter as the three moved on together. She was not allowed to let slip the mask for long; Mr. Darrell soon made his appearance on the scene. He however was not sharp-sighted, and a very slight smile on the lips was generally sufficient to satisfy him and keep him in uninquisitive peace.

"I saw Felix and Calla in the garden," he began conversationally, "and where was Isabel?"

"Bell was here with me; she and Calla are going to the mill for me now."

"Do you know, my dear Gertrude, I think that Felix and Calla are getting very fond of each other?" Mr. Darrell observed, with an important air of confidence, as if he were announcing a discovery to his wife, who knew it a great deal better than he did.

"Do you think so?" replied Mrs. Darrell quietly.

"I do, my dear," he answered, pleased with his own astuteness, and continuing, in his slow, deliberate, dignified way, "She is a charming girl; I am very fond of Calla."

"So are we all," she agreed sweetly.

"And Felix is a good boy—a very good boy, my dear Gertrude. You may be proud of him," he said kindly.

"Yes," Felix's mother assented gently, but with an unaccountable uneasiness in her manner, a sort of wincing, as if he had struck upon a throbbing wound. "He is good," and as she said it she looked away over the garden bushes with eyes that did not see them, eyes across which there came a humid mist that made them look softer and more beautiful, but sadder far than their wont. They were only softly pensive and dreamily melancholy as a rule; the new pain, and inexpressible hopeless yearning in their look, the regret as of a past beyond recall, of even a present bitterness, attracted even Mr. Darrell's notice now.

"There is nothing in it to make you sad, my dear—I think, I hope not, at least! Young people will be young people. I suppose you have not been forming any other plans for Felix?" he said, looking at her questionably.

"No; I have never dreamt of planning for him. I leave all such things to the destiny that is quite certain to arrange them, with or without our assistance."

"Exactly so," agreed Mr. Darrell placidly. "It is never very much good interfering. Human nature, especially in youth, shoots out into so many incousistencies and eccentricities; it affords us so many surprises, that really when one comes to my age one is glad to sit and watch the world go by, and decide comfortably from one's easy-chair that, if matches are made in heaven, the pairs too often get broken asunder in their journey down. Not that I mean any unkind allusion to Felix and Calla; there appears to me nothing very incompatible in them, if Calla is old enough to know her own mind," added Mr. Darrell, to whom Calla still appeared a child.

Meanwhile Isabel and Calla had gone on their marketing errand.

"I enjoy this thing so much," said Calla buoyantly, as they sauntered along a shady path. "I shall never like buying eggs or flour in a proper London shop again!"

"In winter I should like a paved street better than this path. It is a perfect Slough of Despond in the bad season, as you'll find," said Isabel.

"Never mind, we sha'n't mind splashing our stockings so much when we tramp in double file, shall we? And we shall march together all this winter," replied Calla, to whom it was not one of the least pleasant things at La Basse-Rive, to know that her presence was a real delight, her companionship a real boon to Isabel.

"That's nice to think," said Isabel, with a responsive smile that made her look prettier than ever, as she tripped along with her soft light step, a basket swinging slowly in her hand, her golden hair tied up in a mass of loose curls, under a quaint, old-fashioned, striped calico sun-bonnet, the *raison d'être* whereof no one knew, unless it were to keep her fair complexion guiltless of tan or freckle, which purpose might as well have been answered by something more modern. Calla's pretty London milliner-made hat was not a whit more becoming than that "old-world" headgear of Isabel's, and certainly less useful. In consequence of its insufficiency of brim (albeit what it lacked in latitude was made up in altitude of flowers and bows) Calla's naturally fair complexion was sun-tinted to a more warm and southern hue, which suited her great, dark, black-fringed eyes well, but left an oddly contrasting and betraying band of whiteness at the top of her forehead just where the hat-brim went.

The farm-yard gate stood open; it was a question whether it was ever shut, whether the weak hinges would ever allow it to shut, whether—with Nero, the evil-looking, heavy-jowled, black brindled dog chained hard by—it was ever necessary it should be shut. There was nobody in the yard at the moment the two girls entered; a mild-eyed cow put her head over a half-door and lowed gently at them; Nero barked one lazy bark, but he did not think they were very dangerous intruders.

The establishment is not so clean as an English farm-yard would or ought to be ; and Calla catches her muslin dress daintily away from a huge, fat, black pig who waddles towards her, grunting, with earthy snout. He has been grouting in a rubbish heap, which stands in a more conspicuous place in the path than seems at all necessary or desirable, in company with two brothers in blackness and adipose development. A brood of yellow chickens are running tamely about ; an anxious hen clucks after them from a dilapidated wicker coop : and Calla's admiration is attracted by what she terms "a darling little piggy," which is small and spotted, with a curly tail. A blue-bloused man looks in at the other end of the yard, and, perceiving the visitors, retires modestly, and pushes forward in his place a snowy-capped and starched-aproned woman, whose stiff white linen looks incongruously clean in the dirt of the farm-yard, and who approaches with a shrill and polite,

"Bonjour, mesdemoiselles."

Isabel makes known her requirements, and Madame passes on the request.

"Nanon ! des œufs—frais, bien frais, vois-tu ! Combien, made-moiselle ? Une douzaine, mais oui ! Nanon ! une douzaine !"

Nanon, who is also snowy and starched as to cap, and to whose fat, square face, browner than any chestnut, no head-dress could be more unbecoming, presently brings the eggs in her apron. Madame places them tenderly in Isabel's basket, wherein already reposes a layer of hay for their couch ; no payment is made, as the relations between the Château and the farm are on the credit system, and Isabel and Calla walked off with their prize.

"Nanon grows uglier and uglier, doesn't she ?" observed Isabel pensively, half lifting the cover of her little basket to peep at the eggs as they trudge along.

"I suppose life has some pleasures for her and the hundreds like her, ugly and hard-worked. But it puzzles me to know what they can be," says Calla sincerely, in the fulness of her joyous youth.

"Felix would tell you, I dare say ; only he would look deep down into the question of happiness in general first."

"And then he would come up to the surface, with a new cap, a saint's fête-day, or—— Oh ! Bell, what else *can* they have ?"

Calla and Isabel are not especially uncomprehending or self-absorbed natures, but they understand about as much of the human lives which are running parallel with theirs not a quarter of a mile away, as of the manners and customs in the moon, or as much as any human creature comprehends of any life except his own little cabbage-leaf existence, until the lesson of universal sympathy is learnt (which no depth of suffering, no height of joy, can teach to some).

They reach the mill, and run up the wooden steps at the entrance.

Isabel, modestly refraining from opening the half-door which leads to a dark entry, and a ladder-like flight of stairs, calls out "Jeannette!" and receiving no answer, louder, with a shrill accent on the last syllable, "*Jean-neite!*"

"Elle est là haut," says a gruff voice from somewhere.

"Qui est là?" says a shrill voice from above. Then a pair of large sabot-shod feet appear clattering down the stairs, then an apron, then a kerchief, and then a cap come into sight.

"Oh pardon, mademoiselle," says Jeannette apologetically, flinging open the half-gate. Isabel is liked in the neighbourhood—"Elle est si gentille!" the people say. Jeannette's sister, Angelique, hearing the visitor's voice, next appears upon the scene, white cap first, then kerchief, apron, petticoat, and sabots, as she arises from the regions below step by step, in a manner suggestive of a stage trap-door.

While the flour is being fetched for Bell and Calla, they summon Jeannette's child, a favourite little *protégée* of theirs—a toddling, black-eyed, round, plump, "beauty of a baly," who, with truly national politeness, holds on to Isabel's skirt with one fat small hand, while within the other she reaches up an offering of a dandelion. Isabel kisses her for the *cadeau*, and gravely pins it into the bosom of her dress, to Jeannette's delight. Calla is rather more shy of children—strange children, that is—than of grown-up people. Isabel knows no shyness of man, woman, or child. Calla carries the parcel of flour, and Bell the egg-basket, as they turn homewards.

On their way they meet Felix, who stows away into his coat-tail pocket a red book that he carries, and takes their charges from them, tucking the flour-bag under one arm, and swinging the basket in his other hand.

"Don't you pick the beast of burden's pocket while he carries your traps for you," he observes.

"We want the book!"

"You're going to have it—on the sands, and not one minute before. We're going to finish the story on the spot where we began it."

The story they were reading was "*Bhanavar the Beautiful*." Felix had made fun of the girls at first for selecting a fairy story; but after looking at it, and after being requested to do so by Calla, had consented not only to read it, but to read it aloud. It was Isabel who had chosen the story, which was thoroughly to Isabel's taste; she had long ago climbed up the library ladder and selected it from the ranks.

Thus it happens this morning that Felix and Calla walk down to the sands with the book, while Isabel turns homewards and betakes herself to the Château with the eggs and flour.

Marie-Rose is to be initiated this day into the mysteries of a certain *gâteau à la crème* from a recipe Isabel has discovered ; and Isabel is to join Felix and Calla on the sands "presently." Bell's "presentlys" are very vague measurements of time ; and they are not without misgivings that the "Story of Bhanavar the Beautiful" may be finished before she makes her appearance ; but this does not appear to trouble them much, probably because they are so well aware that Bell has read the story before.

They take the biggest umbrella they can find, and seek a suitable spot on the sands where they may wedge it into a chink between the rocks so as to form a shelter.

It is one of those still, sultry days when the clear sky impresses one with a dazzling sense of the measurelessness of those depths of blue, those depths that seem to deepen bluer and bluer as you gaze, until you feel lost in the infinite unapproachable glory like a little leaf in a great, calm ocean. Under the intense melting azure of the sky, the sea lies in a lazy, slumberous calm, almost too languid to lavish its soft and lingering kisses on the shore.

This is the sort of day when it would seem only fit that a gorgeous striped, velvet-limbed panther should lie stretched out upon those yellow sands and basking in that burning sun. It is a day that somehow suits with the barbaric splendour and Oriental imagery of the story which Felix reads aloud to Calla, and yet suits less well with it, perhaps, than would a stained-glass conservatory, its atmosphere heavy with the aromatic scents of tropical plants, and through its richly tinted panes that great brazen sun pouring in many coloured rays.

The story with its fanciful gloom, its warm glow of colouring, all black shadows and jewelled lights, possesses a strange fascination for Calla. It is not in a style which ordinarily holds much attraction for Felix ; but perhaps at this season his imagination is more exalted and excited than usual ; or perhaps the silent interest of his listener has some influence over him. Anyhow, he reads the story to the end, and gives not the slightest sign of being tired or "bored."

Felix is not gifted with any special talent for reading aloud. His accent partakes a little too much of the monotone, and all feeling is rather implied by a certain tone of suppression, than developed and expressed in his voice. But Calla thinks it perfection, and listens rapt and devoted to the last words.

She does not thank him for his exertions to please and amuse her, and his endeavours remain unrecompensed and unacknowledged, except so far as a soft smile and a half sigh, and a whispered "Is that all?" may be considered as recompense. She takes the book from his hand, and turns over the pages, slowly, dwelling on a passage here and there, reading now and then a few words aloud, for this story of love and magic holds a strange charm for her.

"I have been beloved by the noblest three of earth. I will ask no more of Love," she repeats, in a dreamy whisper, looking up from the page as she reads these words, looking out over the sea, her dark eyes glowing under the light, tremulous shadow of the slender, sun-burnt hand, with which she screens them from the light.

"Three? Why, Calla, wouldn't one be enough?"

He fixes his eyes inquiringly on her face, and draws, half unconsciously, an inch nearer, but she avoids meeting his look.

"Oh, in real life, I suppose, yes. And Bhanavar was so easy to win, it is almost a wonder she was content with *three*," she replied lightly but colouring a little.

"Is there any *one*, Calla, with you—any *one* with whom you would be content?" he asks, completely ignoring the question of Bhanavar's Oriental readiness to be wooed and won.

Calla does not look round; indeed, she averts her face a little further away from him; still she knows perfectly well how he is gazing at her.

"Perhaps there may be," she answers, a little embarrassedly, but trying to speak lightly still.

"Who is he?" inquires Felix sharply.

"I didn't say there *was* a 'he'," she replies petulantly in her turn and blushing painfully now. "I only said there *may* be—somewhere in the world."

"You only look upon me as a brother," says Felix, turning a little away from her, with a sudden touch of gloom in his tone, and, withal, with an unconscious interrogation—a tentative appeal.

They are like two children shyly skirmishing around a point before either dares to come to it.

"And you look upon me as a sister," she said in a very low voice, but very positively.

"Do I?" he rejoins.

Her head droops lower; the ribbon upon her bosom flutters gently to and fro; she picks up a handful of sand, and lets the yellowish grains slip through her fingers slowly as through an hour-glass, watching the process with an appearance of the deepest interest. While she watches the dropping sand, he watches her, and so they are silent for a minute or two.

Then he takes her hand, yellow dust and all, into his, and says—

"Calla?"

There is no answer, except that a sweeter beauty, softer than a blush and lovelier than a smile, suffuses her face, and slowly, as if drawn by some magnetism she is powerless to resist, that downcast face looks up, and the deep eyes, beautiful in a new-born shyness and wonder, turn to his.

Their eyes meet, and the hour has come:

CHAPTER IX.

"GO NOT, HAPPY DAY, FROM THE SHINING FIELDS."

FELIX and Calla had no intention of keeping to themselves the interesting discovery that they were mutually created for each other, and that Providence had evidently designed them expressly as mates, in consequence of which discovery they intended duly to carry out the decree of Providence, and unite the courses of their future lives in one channel.

With the intention of imparting this information, Felix straightway sought his mother in her room, while Calla, bathed in blushes, radiant in a rosy glow of new, and scarcely yet comprehended happiness, pleaded guilty to the charge which Isabel, after one long look on her face, proceeded to lay against her; and the two girls plunged heart and soul into those two *rôles* so delightful to girlhood, the confidante and the heroine of a love-story—to the former, of course, especially delightful when there are complications and difficulties in the way of the latter, but pleasant enough even when the story runs as simply and as smoothly as this promised to do.

Mrs. Darrell was sitting alone in her boudoir, leaning her head upon her hand; she turned with a little start as Felix entered, and whether consciously or unconsciously he never thought, she dropped a newspaper that she had held on her lap down to the ground. He felt rather uncertain as to how to begin his errand, and glancing vaguely round, as if in search of some suggestion, his eye fell on the paper, and he observed, casually:

"What have you there, mother? This week's paper?"

"No, nothing," she answered, indifferently and languidly, scarcely troubling to follow his eye, and see what he was looking at.

Felix, however, having come close to his mother, stooped and picked the paper up, in that motiveless way with which we so often perform some trifling and unnecessary action, while our thoughts are absorbed elsewhere.

"Ah, Australian!" he said, glancing at the type and title with a little interest. "I always like a glimpse of the old papers. What a treat it used to be to get an *Argus* up the country! Anything in it?" glancing carelessly down the columns.

"Nothing at all," replied Mrs. Darrell, with a tired look, wearily pushing her hair off her temples, and passing her hand across her eyes.

"Are you not well, mother?" asked Felix, noticing that she looked worn and pale.

"Mr. Darrell and Isabel have asked me that six times to-day," she said resignedly. "I am perfectly well. Put that paper down, Felix. You have something to say to me, have you not?"

She looked at him intently; she had read, from the first word he spoke, that his thoughts were pre-occupied, and pleasantly pre-occupied too.

"Yes," he admitted frankly and readily. "I don't know whether you will be surprised, mother—I do not think you will. I think you can guess what it is."

His colour was just a tinge brightened, and his face wore a look of that deep gladness happier than a smile. His mother's womanly perceptions could not fail to interpret it aright. Yet the happiness on his face seemed to reflect itself only in pain on hers, as she said,

"Is it about Calla, Felix? Is it *that* you have come to tell me?"

"Yes," he admitted. "And you are not surprised?"

"No," she answered, with a slight tremor in her voice, "I am not surprised. Only to-day I—I have been thinking!"

She paused, not so much in hesitation, but rather as having said all she meant to say.

It was seldom she looked so long and so earnestly at Felix as now, and seldom with so strange a look of unaccountable pain. From the very light on his face a cloud seemed to pass to hers, and brood there darkly. It was as if for once the sorrow that always seemed to throw a shadow over her life—itsself invisible, unknown, and only to be guessed by the shade it cast—arose in its own dark shape into sight, looked out for once unveiled from her eyes. In those soft secret eyes, with their long drooping lashes, and their sweet calm of unstirred sadness, it was seldom that any one had seen the flash of passion, seldomer still the trace of tears. So it was with a surprise and concern proportionate to the rarity of the occurrence that Felix noted the trouble that broke up her usual tranquillity, the irrepressible tears that blinded and brimmed over her eyes as she gazed at him.

"Mother," he said anxiously—"why, mother, you are not sorry? What is it agitates you so?"

He would have taken her in his arms, and tried to soothe her apparent agitation, but she did not respond to his caress. Rather she seemed to shrink into herself, and draw away from any demonstration, to be half alarmed and half annoyed at her own weakness. In silence she recovered herself, and the old quietude, if now a trifle constrained, drew gradually like a veil over her face again by the time she had wiped away the traces of her tears.

"Do not mind me, Felix," she said; "it is not that I had not

expected this, only it naturally touches me a little deeply when it comes."

Her emotion had surprised and distressed her son; man-like, he always felt helpless and perplexed before a woman's weeping. Her restored calm, however, quickly relieved him, for he was by nature too straightforward to suspect unknown under-currents in a life whose surface he knew so well, and he began to think that perhaps it really was, as she said, only natural that she should be moved at such a time both by memories of self and selfless hopes and sympathies.

Notwithstanding the unaccountable agitation, so rare in *her*, which he at this hour forgot, but in after-time remembered, Mrs. Darrell appeared to have no objection to offer, no obstacle to raise in the lovers' path.

When, at the end of a brief interview, when she was quite her own serene self again, Felix said, kneeling by her side, as he used to do when a boy, "Come, mother, give me a kiss, and tell me you will love my Calla all the more now," she answered sweetly.

"I do not know that I can promise to love her any *more*, my boy, for she is so very dear to me already."

With this eminently satisfactory conclusion, Felix left his mother, and went to Calla, and forgot all about the Australian newspaper he had picked up, until next day it occurred to him to ask for it, that he might see how things in general were going on at the other side of the world. It was not very surprising that it could not be found, as the roll-call of articles returned missing at La Bassa-Rive was always a long one—indeed, it would have been very surprising if it had been found, considering that Mrs. Darrell had torn it up and dispersed its fragments to the four winds of heaven, all except one slip, which she cut out and locked away in a secret drawer of her desk, in obedience to the universal feminine instinct of keeping relics, more especially if they happen to be of a compromising kind.

Mr. Darrell was as amenable to the young people's wishes as his wife. He said, however, that nothing ought to be considered settled until the approval of Calla's father had been obtained. Mr. Yorke must be written to; his answer must be waited for; there must be no open and unconditional arrangements entered into until that answer had been received.

With this view of the subject Mrs. Darrell quite coincided, and Felix and Calla had not the slightest opposition to offer to it.

"Papa is sure not to be disagreeable. He never *is* disagreeable—he is always a darling," Calla observed trustfully and contentedly, as the lovers talked over their plans in a cosy *tête-à-tête*.

"And what does it matter whether things are called 'settled' or not?" queried Felix philosophically. "We haven't so much to do

with the world here, that the world need care whether our engagement is settled or *unsettled*. It's fixed enough for us, Calla, isn't it?—you are mine, and I am yours, never to be parted any more."

"No, never any more," she said, uttering these saddest of all words in the happiest of tones. "And I really think, Felix, that when we have got papa's blessing by post, in approved form, we shall not feel a bit more engaged than we do now."

"Do you feel engaged, my lily?" he responded with a bright smile, half amused and wholly loving, lighting up his face. "My white lily, you never knew what it was to feel 'engaged' before, did you? Is it nice? or do you wish yourself free to pick and choose again?"

And they wandered off into that lovers' talk which is, of all conversations under the heavens, the most absorbingly interesting to the speakers, and the most utterly boring to every other human creature.

Mrs. Darrell must have been very happy to witness their content. Yet her never-exuberant spirits seemed rather to sink than to brighten now. Perhaps to look on at the castle-building and the golden dreams of these happy young lovers, recalled her own early wooing, and cast a cloud of memory over her soul. Perhaps Isabel's divination was right, when she said confidentially to Calla:

"I fancy it makes her think of poor Glynley, and remember the days of *his* engagement (in the lowered voice, and with the cautious look round with which Glynley Grey's name was always mentioned at La Basse-Rive on the rare occasions when it was mentioned at all).

Mrs. Darrell was very kind and tender to Calla, but according to the natural rule of reserve in the family, seldom alluded confidentially to the change of her position as regarded Felix, although she made manifest her maternal sanction by allowing them ample opportunities of being as much together as the most devoted couple could reasonably demand. Only once she said to Calla, with an earnest, searching look,

"You are young, dear, but you have not lived secluded and retired here, like my Isabel. You have mixed in the outside world, you have seen other men. Is my boy really and truly your heart's choice?"

"Dear Mrs. Darrell," the girl said, caressingly, but with naïve surprise, "how could I ever have chosen any other, having once known him?"

"You cannot conceive the possibility? Ah! child, you have dipped your feet already in the waters, you have begun the voyage—you will never touch shore again."

"If this is the sea that I am floating on now, I never *wish* to touch the shore again!"

Mrs. Darrell sighed.

"So others have thought," she said. "Heaven grant you a fair voyage, my child, for this is *life* that begins for you now! But, Calla dear, I may as well ask you one thing while we are on this subject—I know that you and my Isabel are like sisters, but do not, if you can help it, lead *her* into dreams, and fancies, and thoughts of loving and being loved like you. Don't think me mistrustful of your prudence, dear," she added kindly, and in a lighter and more careless tone; "I trust your discretion perfectly, but you know her sensitive, highly-organized temperament, and her susceptible and impressionable imagination, and I am sure you will understand me when I say that I do not think it well that she should be castle-building and dreaming, and getting into the mood for any foolish romances with any of those half-bred young fellows who would hang about here if I would let them."

Calla understood and assented, and promised to be most discreet, but she thought to herself with a smile that there was very little fear of any man, young or old, well or ill bred, being allowed the opportunity of hanging about the Château, within whose rigorously guarded fold seldom a wolf was permitted to penetrate, although, with characteristic and inconsistent incaution, the Darrells left Isabel free to wander about according to her own free will, and even would sometimes fling the gates of the home wide to some passing friend from London or Paris who appeared at least as dangerous as the poor, harmless young men of the neighbourhood. Calla knew too, and wondered that the mother's loving vigilance did not perceive that the very monotony and isolation of Isabel's life was calculated to pre-dispose her to the "dreams and fancies" Mrs. Darrell seemed to dread.

The day came only too quickly when Felix must return to London. It was three weeks from that morning talk on the sands; and, although the day of his departure came all too soon, still those three weeks had been long ones. It is a mistake to think that happy hours always fly. They seem to have flown when they are gone, but in each hour of deepest happiness there are concentrated days of ordinary life. Those three weeks to Calla were a whole long summer-time.

She and Felix were singularly suited to each other. Their natures were attuned in perfect harmony. Love between strongly contrasted characters seems a common thing, but there is generally certain harmony and congeniality of nature underlying superficially opposite characteristics. Beauty may be refined, and delicate, and ethereal, and the beast may be rough, and growling, and grizzly, but some affinity of inner nature there must be between them if Beauty and the Beast are to lead a happy life. Felix and Calla were thoroughly congenial spirits, united in a perfect harmony alike of disposition, of tastes, and talents.

Calla, of course, constituted herself Felix's copyist, reader, and general assistant in the work he had in hand. They used to sit reading over the copy of his manuscript together, she with a pencil ready for marginal notes, their two chairs drawn as close as they could possibly be set, their two heads bent together, his arm round her, her hair brushing his cheek, both of them as grave as two judges, and as happy as two children. Incredible as it may appear, the work really did progress, and chapter after chapter was neatly paged and put away in the portfolio, the fruit of those happy hours which they confidently deemed were but the first of many such. For they, of course, were never to have a thought apart, never a separate interest; they were to work together, plan together, consult together, always, even as they did now in these the loveliest hours of life—hours so bright to those who enjoy them, and yet to all onlookers who have *lived*, touched with an undefinable shade of sadness.

Felix and Calla worked and played, and loved and laughed the happy time away, and did not sigh for it as it passed, deeming it only the bright and rosy dawn of a still brighter and fairer day.

They went on the old rambles by sun and starlight on the sands and in the woods, almost invariably accompanied by Isabel, who, however, often did them a kindness by odd and fitful disappearances—as sudden and unexpected as an elf dropping down through a trap-door in a pantomime—or lingered discreetly behind to pluck figurative gooseberries.

They drove in the pony-chaise to the market of the nearest town, and imagined themselves housekeeping for their own legs of mutton, and ate apricots as the pony jogged slowly homewards; they ran the usual errands with more than usual willingness to the neighbouring farms, and inspired sympathy in the hearts of Jeanette and Angelique at the mill; while in their own household they were a new and unfailing interest. For although there was formally supposed to be "nothing settled," yet as they had not the slightest doubt of Mr. Yorke's giving them his consent and blessing after the most approved style, they took no especial pains to appear politely indifferent to each other. Calla was transparent as crystal; and Felix, though occasionally reserved, seldom wore a mask.

Another sunny day shines out from the bright confusion of that past. It is the morning of Felix's departure. He and Isabel and Calla are picking fruit for the day's *compote* in the orchard as merrily as though he had not been going away. They are not thinking of the coming separation of a month or so, but rejoicing in the present together. Isabel runs in with the basket when it is full, and Felix and Calla linger still, looking for blackberries, which are not ripe yet. Calla has brought a parasol out with her; but it has been used more for a hook to pull fruit down with than as a sunshade.

Now she is quite sure there is a beautiful ripe blackberry on that high bough, and trying to reach it her parasol is caught up Absalom-like by its tasseled fringe, and suspended to the topmost twig.

"Here, let me reach it for you," says Felix, coming to the rescue, and pulling the parasol down from its eminence.

"No, no; I will get it myself," says Calla, flushed and laughing, tiptoeing after the unattainable blackberry.

She is so beautiful in her free grace, the sleeves falling back from her long, fair arms, her head thrown back, and her whole figure alive with its characteristic, active grace, that Felix obediently looks on and lets her make the attempt for herself, and tear the muslin sleeve and scratch her hand therein.

"And the blackberry is not ripe after all! Oh, poor little fingers wounded in vain!" he says half laughing, but holding the little hand, and pulling out a handkerchief from his breast-pocket to envelop the scratched finger in.

During this operation of the healing art, Calla peeps into his pocket with her head a little on one side, like an inquisitive bird.

"What's this you've got treasured away here?"—pointing to the corner of an envelope that is in sight.

"That's Lusada's last letter. You may have it; read it; you'll be interested, no doubt, as you know all about Lusada. It will give you an idea of the life he is leading now. Only don't lose the address, for I want to answer it. I shall have a bit of news for him this time, shan't I?"

She smiles coyly as she abstracts the letter daintily from his pocket and unfolds it.

"Has *he* any similar news? Let me see what he has to say," she observes, glancing down the pages with running comments and questions, not all of them of a kind complimentary to Mr. Julius Lusada.

"Has he been killing anybody lately? or breaking open any more prisons? Felix, he seems to be conducting himself with disappointing propriety! He has made up his mind to abandon the pursuit of Fame, and follow the equally fickle goddess of Fortune! A very wise choice. Good gracious, what is he up to now? 'Shipping indigo!'—what an unromantic thing for a hero!"

"A capital paying thing," observes Felix.

"Here," continues Calla, dipping into another page, "is a pleasing description of a camp with an unpronounceable name. 'Reptiles'—'robberies'—'renegades'—the three new *R.'s*! One ought to have a dictionary to translate him—what's a '*greaser*?' and what's a '*va quero*?' And here he observes, 'My troop were the wildest barbarians that ever slew or stole: but one can 'work with rough materials!' Really, I should think that the rougher

the materials the better *he* liked it! Why, I declare he actually quotes Byron! and *here*, it appears that he is—do I read aright?—‘well nigh weary of these eternal wanderings,’ and hopes that yet before he dies, ‘if only for a season,’ he may ‘touch the Happy Isles,’ and forget the world and Ambition in Peace and in such love as he used to dream of once! I should not have fancied he was at all given to love dreams! but how oddly his little dip into sentiment comes in after his camp of barbarians! I should recommend him to ‘take some savage woman’—as the young man in ‘Locksley Hall’ thought of doing. I should think a copper-coloured squaw would suit him very well!”

“Rather he than I!” exclaims Felix, with a burst of laughter. “Poor Julius! Calla, you don’t seem to bear in mind the proverb, ‘Love me, love my—friend!’”

“Oh, I’ll love him—when he comes—quite as much as you will wish me to!” she answers gaily. “When *is* he coming, by-the-by?”

“You see he talks of coming over in a few months. But a few months to a fellow like Lusada, who is here, there, and everywhere, may dwindle into a few weeks, or spread out into more than a few years. But he’s safe to come some day—and I shall show him my lily—my white lily, that I shall have planted in my own garden then,” continues Felix, whom love has inspired with the usual lover’s tendency to metaphor and especially to discover likenesses between the beloved and various of the most beautiful botanical specimens, of which a lily was his favourite, though he occasionally rang the changes between that and the rose. Nobody could have called Calla a violet or a primrose, so he never drew his similes from the wild hedge flower.

“If your lily is as bronzed as she is now, he won’t think much of the appropriateness of the appellation,” observes Calla gaily.

“Such a first-rate fellow he is,” remarks Felix in a meditative way. “Some day we’ll travel together, he and I and you. Where shall we go? No, the question is, where *sha’n’t* we go?”

“Oh! Felix, I wish you weren’t going to-day,” she says, reminded of the fact by the allusion to travelling.

“I’ll be back in a month, dear—or more, or less,” he says, like Lord Lovel, of ancient song, and twists a spray of golden buttercups among the dark waves of her hair, and smiles approvingly at the effect. Inspired by his artistic success to further efforts, he twists a hasty sort of wreath from a few buttercups, a tiny spray of small red berries (that would have been black and ripe some day), and a big ox-eye daisy. This elegant and novel ornament he proceeds to dispose of on Calla’s hair, and remarks appreciatively, “There, it looks fine!”

She smiles, evidently very much consoled and comforted.

"The blackberries will be ripe when you come back," she observes. "Won't we have happy mornings blackberrying?"

"Mademoiselle, le déjeuner est servi!" calls a shrill, voluble voice, and Claudine's white linen head-dress appears over the orchard gate.

"We must go in, I suppose," says Calla, with a reluctant little sigh. And hand in hand, like two children, they saunter slowly and with lagging steps towards the house.

Déjeuner—the mid-day meal—is ready, and Marie-Rose has taken especial pains with it, because it is "Monsieur Felix's" last day. And after luncheon Mr. Darrell produces a flask of rare Curaçoa, of which the three elders partake during dessert. The girls decline it; but one of them does not miss much by her refusal, as Felix sits next Calla, and silently pushes his glass towards her, and she does not refuse *him*, and so they share it as a loving cup, sip by sip, together, as if they were back in their school-days. There is sometimes a sort of simplicity and child-like transparency about the affection of these two that would highly amuse the members of their "set" in London. Netta Tregarne would watch them with gentle and sympathetic surprise, as if contemplating some attractive zoological curiosity. Miss Jacky Hunter would comment caustically on such open betrayal of being mutually "spoons." But they are in Arcadia here, they are out of the great world, and to them it is as if they were the only two creatures breathing the breath of real life, the life-in-life, of all La Basse-Rive.

Soon it is time for Felix to go; the pony-chaise is ready, and the other members of the family flock first to the door to arrange the small amount of bachelor's luggage he takes with him, and to pat and give sugar to the pony, leaving Felix and Calla for a few moments alone.

"Well, it's good-bye now, my Calla-lily. You never saw the lands where the calla-lilies grow like common garden-lilies here. You don't know what they are, but they are like you, so pure and marble-fair and tall. I always thought you like them. You look well with those flowers in your hair. A pretty picture for me to take away with me. Good-bye."

"For a whole long month!" she says regretfully.

"It seems a year. But it will be only thirty days, just like any other month, after all. Soon, so soon, I will be back with you. Think of me, write to me, take care of yourself for me, and be happy, my Calla."

"I will be happy—I am too happy in being yours even to grieve at parting from you now," she says; and smiling with the tender faith of a love that knows no fear, she looks into his eyes and lifts her face to meet his kiss.

So he goes away, happy, too—happy in the memory of Calla's

loyal eyes and loving smile as they exchanged those parting words of hope—with the picture of Calla's bright beauty, crowned Bacchanal-like with leaves and berries nestling in her rich dark hair, smiling in the summer sunshine, and glad, not sad, in their good-bye, vivid in his mind's eye all the way.

BOOK IV

"THROUGH THE SHADOWS."

" If there were a sympathy in choice,
 War, Death, or Sickness, did lay siege to it !
 Making it momentary as a sound,
 Swift as a shadow, short as any Dream,
 Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
 That in a spleen unfolds both Heaven and Earth,
 And ere a man hath power to say, Behold !
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up—
 So quick bright things come to confusion ! "

Midsummer Night's Dream.

CHAPTER X.

" O CHANGED IN LITTLE SPACE ! "

THE few weeks of Felix Grey's stay in London had glided away as swiftly and smoothly as could be expected. On both sides of the Channel the lovers had supported their separation with commendable contentment. They were too confident and hopeful and happy to repine at a brief division, for it seemed to them now that really divided they could never be any more; they deemed their union one that, in the face of time, or absence, or distance, stood indissoluble. So she lived in daily dreams of him, content; and he lived as content in thoughts of her, in work for her, work to pave the early steps of the way towards the home that should be, that they had built together already in that aerial region where there is never one of its myriad castles but is taller, grander, lovelier than any this dull earth ever knew.

Meanwhile the mailbags between France and England had borne almost daily missives from one to another of the affianced pair; for duly affianced they had now a perfect right to consider themselves, one of Calla's letters having given to Felix in glowing terms the expected good tidings that Mr. Yorke's sanction and blessing had arrived in proper form, per post, from the other side of the Atlantic.

That London circle, of which Calla reigned as one of the beauties (whom not to admire was to write yourself a Goth in the circle's eyes), had also by this time become aware of her prospects as regarded matrimony, and most of them kindly rejoiced thereat. Felix Grey was "one of them," and they did not, as a rule, grudge her to him—although here and there the rule was proved in the usual mode. One struggling aspirant for the laurels, who was then living in a garret on the product of his last ring and his watch chain, observed loftily that "it was no great match for *her*!" and another who, during the last season, had delusively deemed himself "first favourite," expressed his gratification with an ultra-warmth that told tales.

Calla had been too fair a star, and shone too sweetly on the obscurest worshipper, for several aspiring eyes not to have selected her out from all the constellation as their Polar guiding light. Still, on the whole, her choice was approved, and Felix's fortune envied. He had not deliberately intended to announce his engagement: but in a moment of expansion—following on the receipt of the paternal blessing—when *tête-à-tête* with Dick Dorvil, he had let slip an allusion to his happiness, and the news of course flashed around the society as if along the telegraph wires.

Now there were only three or four days to pass before Felix would return to the Château de la Basse-Rive. He was thinking pleasantly of how brief the time was, and how already it was flying, while he disinterred his evening suit from the innermost recess of a portmanteau, and took credit to himself as a martyr for the manner in which he was about to dispose of a few hours of his valuable time.

He was going out to dinner—"a quiet, sociable little dinner," a kind of entertainment never beloved of his heart, although he considered it a shade less objectionable than the state banquets of the full season. However, now, "there was nobody in town, and of course it was not a party, his host had said, "but he and Mrs. Sneyd had a guest staying with them, and wanted to get two or three friends together."

Felix, in an off-guard moment of amiability, had accepted the invitation, and now regarded himself as a victim. He did not know his host very intimately; he did not particularly like what he had seen of his hostess; they were not of the clique he most frequented, so he was nearly sure that he should know no one there, and should probably be intolerably bored; and he wondered why on earth he had been fool enough to answer in the affirmative, and reflected how much better employed he would have been working at his new book.

Quite unconsciously, and unsuspecting of the fate that works in little things, he hailed a hansom cab, and wondered whether his

watch was slow, and whether he should be late, and receive a chilling greeting from the lady of the house; and then, as he alighted, he made the painful discovery of a split in the thumb of his left-hand glove, which split, by the time dinner was announced, had reached half across the back of his hand, so that he was glad to take it off, and cram it into his pocket.

The two or three friends and the family made up a party of twelve, quite as many as the rather small dining-room would comfortably hold, and the twelve stiff-backed velvet chairs had to be set so close together, they fitted in like pieces of a puzzle. Felix's anticipations as to his lack of acquaintance with the assembled party were fully realized; all save one were total strangers to him. The lady allotted to him was a pale, shy, demure young girl in white, who seemed more interested in the low-toned flattery of a handsome middle-aged man at her other side than in Felix's rather lame attempts at doing his duty in the line of agreeable conversation.

Felix had no stock of society chit chat, and could not talk unless either his subject or his listener interested him. On his other hand he had a bright-coloured, high-voiced lady, with very white teeth and very black eyebrows, who was evidently minded to make herself agreeable to a shrewd-eyed, thoughtful, and trustworthy-looking middle-aged gentleman opposite, whom Felix heard addressed as "Doctor."

Somebody at table had been to look over a lunatic asylum lately, and the conversation turned upon hereditary insanity, and touched upon the question of marriage when such a taint existed in the family, and remarkable cases of the outbreak of such a taint in generation after generation. Felix was not joining in this conversation; he had been endeavouring to entertain his partner by asking her how she liked book after book that she had never read, and after having given this up as hopeless, was quietly eating his white-bait, when a few words struck on his ear that startled him.

"By the way, doctor, how is that poor fellow, Glynnley Grey?" the lady next Felix inquired across the table.

Felix looked up. Had he caught that name aright? he wondered. Grey is a common name, but not so Glynnley; and what was it they were talking of?—hereditary insanity?

"Just the same," replied the doctor. "Now that is one of the saddest cases. It would be as great a miracle as raising the dead if he were ever restored."

"Some accidental resemblance of name—some mistake," said Felix to himself; but, nevertheless, a sudden chill had struck him, an instant presentiment had laid hold of him as the doctor spoke, and before, certainly before, the doctor added his next words.

"That was an hereditary case also. I ascertained. Father died mad

somewhere in Australia. They called it *delirium tremens*, but it was clear insanity, I happen to know. Such a marriage was a crime, and the consequences, tragic as they were, are scarcely astonishing to one who knew the family history. Do you know, my dear madam, I discovered that in every generation of that family one has died mad?"

Felix lifted a glass of wine to his lips. He had turned pale, and his brows contracted as if in a spasm of pain; but the hand that held the glass of wine to screen the changed expression of his face did not tremble. No one noticed him. The pale girl in white was bending her ear to catch some whispered sweet nothing from her left-hand neighbour; the black-browed lady on Felix's other hand was absorbed in her opposite neighbour the doctor, and the doctor was looking at her. The host had not caught the name of Grey, and if he had, he would not have connected the idea of a mad Grey in Australia with his calm, collected young friend, the rising author, Grey, recently from America.

"Oh, what a sad affair it was! and however did they manage to keep the affair so hushed up?" gushed the lady.

"Influence," responded the doctor with a little shrug of his shoulders. "There is a deal to be done by trying in this world. But it did leak out a good deal. I knew the poor girl's father, Colonel Fitzgerald; and then Doctor Starke being an old friend of mine, the case is a very interesting one to me. I was at the asylum only last week. The poor fellow was in one of his worst crises. I was only able to see him for a minute. A melancholy affair, very!—half-forgotten, hushed away, and done with now, as such tragedies often are. Ah, my dear madam, if our tongues were not tied, we professional men could tell you strange stories!"

"May I trouble you for a little cold water?" said the pretty girl in white in a soft and confiding murmur to Felix Grey. He handed her the goblet politely if absently, and then looked back across the table to the doctor, who was, however, now just helping himself to a succulent morsel from a silver dish of sweetbread which was on its rounds.

Felix watched for the next words that should be uttered, but the doctor ate his *entrée* placidly; his admiring friend, the black-eyed widow, also directed her attention to her plate, and when they spoke again, it was on other topics—casual currencies of the day. No further allusion was made by any one to the subject for whose continuation Felix watched in vain; it had passed away into the limbo of dead and gone scandals resuscitated for a moment. Felix wondered if it was all a dream. He half fancied he should wake up as if from a reverie and find that the names of Glynnley Grey and Colonel Fitzgerald had never been mentioned, and that it was all a fancy—a trick played by his excited imagination.

Was it really true that here at this table where he had come in a lazy and leisurely mood, to be probably bored and possibly amused, with never a thought of any mishap beyond a torn glove, or any hope beyond a well-ordered dinner and a good glass of madeira—was it here that a family skeleton, which must have been locked away from him in its cupboard so carefully that he had never even caught the echo of the rattle of its bones, chose to burst its locks and come out and grin in his face? Was this really the “skeleton in the house,” the consciousness of whose grim and hidden presence east that eternal shade of sorrow over his mother’s eyes?

He could not believe it. Everything looked the same as it had done half-an-hour ago, before those words struck on his ear. And what then could be the history that was here so darkly hinted, and that from him had been so strangely concealed?

He managed to avoid attracting attention by any expression in look or voice or manner. Felix Grey was generally so quiet, and occasionally laconic and abstracted, that those who knew him only thought that “Grey was in one of his dreamy moods,” and strangers scarcely noticed him at all. He was one of those who generally either passed entirely unnoticed or attracted a more than ordinary share of interest and attention.

He got through the weary dinner at last, though it seemed to him an interminable time until the ladies retired, and after that a still more interminable time until the gentlemen followed them into the drawing-room, where he felt more at ease and off guard, and could lounge over a photograph album and try to clear up the tangled skein of his thoughts.

The result of his reflections was that Dr. Fitzroy found Mr. “Felix or Fabian Day or Gay or Gray or something” (such would at that hour have been Dr. Fitzroy’s most distinct impression of Felix), very attentive to him, that Dr. Fitzroy felt rather flattered by the young man’s intent and half absorbed thoughtful eyes as he listened to whatever Dr. Fitzroy said, and that they discovered, or rather Felix discovered, that they were going in the same direction, and set out to walk part of the way home together.

Felix had made up his mind to hunt down this mystery. It was not in his nature to beat about the bush or waste time in preambles. He had been dumb when the subject had been mentioned first and the blow struck him silent; but now when he found himself walking alone with the doctor, and the corner of the street was turned, and they had got fairly out of sight and reach of the house, now he spoke, and spoke out plainly and at once.

“Dr. Fitzroy, I want you to tell me all you know of Glynmley Grey.”

“Glynmley Grey? Grey! Are you any connection of his?” asked the doctor, struck by the request and the tone in which it

was made, and turning towards Felix with evidently aroused attention.

"Dr. Fitzroy, if the Glynneley Grey you know married Colonel Fitzgerald's daughter, and was the son of Matthew Grey who died at Ballarat, then I am his brother! I have lived all my life abroad, and knew little—nothing—of my brother's history."

It was not all at once, but piecemeal, partly that night and partly thereafter that Felix Grey gathered together the complete story of his brother's life.

It was brief, but a tragic and miserable story enough. He had known hitherto only so far as Glynneley's marriage with Rachel Fitzgerald, that it was a love-match, and that, although Rachel had no fortune, and Glynneley's business brought him only a moderate present competence and vague "prospects," the young couple—they were both in the very morning of life—were bravely and lovingly resolved to push through storm and sunshine hand-in-hand. So they were married, and went on a trip for their honeymoon, and before that brief moon was over, a dark cloud had driven across its brightness. Glynneley fell suddenly ill of fever in Switzerland, and in that illness became full of morbid and insane fancies, strange suspicions, and jealous caprices.

He who had literally idolized Rachel and surrounded her with an adoring tenderness that forbade "the winds of heaven to visit her cheek too roughly," began to be rough, suspicious, loving, but harsh and tyrannic in his treatment of her. A strange and baseless idea that people were working in the dark to separate her from him possessed him; and when his mother Mrs. Grey saw them together—and Rachel confided to her with trouble and tears, "how strange, and ill, and altogether changed" Glynneley was, and wondered "what could ail him!"—Mrs. Grey sat pale and terror-stricken, and silent. She read each look and sign of Glynneley's altered look and manner aright; she knew at once too well what ailed him—that the madness, raving, in which her husband had died had laid its blasting hand upon her son.

She had sometimes dreaded, as one dreads a possibility too horrible to be contemplated, the chance of the insanity which had smitten her husband and his father before him, manifesting itself in her children. But the mother's pride in her children's talents and promising dispositions and her sanguine nature prevented her from ever fearing it with real anxiety, and she had never seriously reflected upon the too well proven hereditary character of the malady. Now this unhappy mother knew that in her hopeful ignorance and ignorant hopes she had allowed a dreadful wrong to be committed and had, without a word of warning, of caution, or of doubt—because, indeed, she herself had felt no fear—permitted a young, innocent, and unsuspecting girl to link herself in life-long

bonds with one of an unhappy race over whose head the most horrible curse that can be entailed on posterity—madness, hung like a sword of Damocles. But Mrs. Grey had never seriously realized this before; she was a woman whose nature always turns as surely away from the contemplation of any calamitous possibilities or coming tempest as the faithful sunflower follows the sun. But the time came quickly when she and Rachel looked into each other's eyes, and saying never a word, abandoned themselves to the full knowledge of the cruel truth. And then Dr. Starke was consulted, and a "temporary seclusion of the patient" was advised.

The young wife, so lately a bride, broken-hearted with trouble and terror—for Glynnley's malady was assuming day by day a more violent and dangerous turn—still with the blind, unreasoning instinct of love, endeavoured to resist the decree, or at least to obtain leave to accompany him. She was of course overruled; and one day the doctor and his assistants came to escort Glynnley Grey to the place where he was to be secluded—and cured, if possible, although to this faint hope they did not encourage his family to cling too confidently.

Now Glynnley was a strong man, and not a "safe" patient to use force to, and they knew it. But he was not to be deluded by the reasons they put forth for his accompanying them. Guessing their object, he bade them stand off; and as they closed round him cautiously and watchfully, he suddenly called aloud and wildly for Rachel. They had wished to keep Rachel out of the way; but the sound of his voice crying so wildly, with such desperate appeal upon her name, was more than she could withstand. She came; she defied the warnings of the men who waved her back, and breaking through them with outstretched arms, she threw herself on her husband's breast, crying—

"I will go with you, love—I will go with you!"

He held her, and looked at the men with a dangerous look, and with one hand hidden.

"You think you'll part us?" he said.

They tried to soothe him, to reason with Rachel, and get her away from him. Her love for him was greater than her fear of him; and it was not in terror, but in obedience to their request, that she loosened her arms from round his neck, and was about to draw herself away from his arm and turn and speak to them.

But whatever words she had been about to utter were never spoken. Glynnley caught her back towards him like a tiger. The hand that had been hidden rose and flashed like steel, and fell. The men flung themselves upon him in time to break the force of the blow, but not to prevent it. The knife he had concealed was red with his wife's blood; and as his mother sat waiting anxiously in a room near at hand, her ears were stricken by two cries that to the

end of her life she never forgot—a woman's shriek and a madman's laugh.

The wound inflicted on Rachel Grey was not in itself dangerous. But she died of it as surely as if he had struck the knife into her heart—a little more slowly, that was all. They might bandage and anoint the external wound, but they could never make the sorely-stricken and broken heart beat healthful music again. They did all that science and unremitting care could do for her, and all in vain.

The wife faded and failed and drooped into her grave without ever seeing her husband again, whilst he, forgetting utterly their dreadful parting, looked out for her almost daily, sometimes hopefully confiding to his keepers, "She is coming to-day," sometimes in paroxysms of fury, shaking the stanchions of his barred windows, declaring she was waiting for him outside.

And now, although Rachel has been in her grave all these years, and he has been told the fact, he knows it not, and still waits for her to come—still in conversation with phantoms of his own creation, will talk of her, and promise "an introduction to my wife."

This was the story that was revealed to Felix Grey; this well-kept and strictly-guarded, select and private asylum, which he, now knowing all, visited in company with Dr. Fitzroy, was the grave that immured his brother; this living death it was, and not more merciful material dissolution and decay, which had been his brother's destiny. That this secret should have been so completely kept from Felix, that he had never even suspected the true history (although he had thought there must have been something especially sad in his brother's fate), was scarcely strange. Long before Glynnley's marriage Felix had gone back to Australia, and at the time of his death was far away up the country, hundreds of miles from the town where his father died, far from all friends and relatives, living out of the world, on a lonely sheep farm, on the border of the bush, and keeping up little correspondence with his family in England.

Dr. Starke received Felix Grey very courteously, and, especially after a little "aside" conversation with his friend Dr. Fitzroy, treated him with an appearance of interest and friendliness he did not always vouchsafe to strangers.

"I am afraid an interview with your brother will not be practicable to-day. You can see him, of course; but if he is in the excited mood he was last night and this morning, I don't think it would be advisable to enter his room."

"Am I to look at him like a wild beast, through bars?" thought Felix to himself, with a painful, bitter smile; then he followed the doctor upstairs and down long corridors.

It was "through bars," certainly, he found that he was to look upon his brother again; though Glynnley Grey was not in a cage,

but in a comfortably but sparsely furnished room. In the door of this room was a barred orifice, large enough to look through conveniently, and get a good view of the room and its inmates. Dr. Starke looked, and Dr. Fitzroy cast a business-like glance in, and then both the doctors drew aside and bowed, and beckoned Felix to approach.

Felix looked in.

He saw a plainly papered room, with a bare table, two or three chairs, a fire-place without fire-irons or fenders, a curtainless bed, and bars at the windows. He saw one man, evidently a keeper, sitting quietly in a corner, looking rather bored. He saw another man standing in the centre of the room, bowing and talking to some imaginary person. This was his brother—a brown-bearded man now, with strange eyes, and grey streaks in his hair, although he was still young in years; but there was no question of his identity—changed as he was, this was Glynnley Grey. No one stood before him, but evidently some imagined presence was between him and the blank wall whereon he looked, for he was smiling, bowing, talking volubly, laughing in a mocking kind of way. So the two brothers—the one unknowing of the meeting—met again.

Felix had been quite calm and self-possessed till now. He had watched the sudden and total wreck of his dearest hopes within this last day or two—had stood on the shore and seen his ship go down at sea, silent, without one cry of pain. He had been quite cool, and steady of look and step, as he came down this corridor, with only an added line on his thoughtful brow, a darker shade over his earnest eyes.

But now, at the sound of that voluble speech, addressed to nothing, of that harsh laugh that had nothing to say to merriment, at the sight of that figure, his brother's altered but unmistakable face and figure, bowing to the empty air, he shuddered and turned deadly pale, and staggered back against the wall. He leant against the wall for support, breathless, as if he were about to faint.

Dr. Starke was by his side in a moment. The two physicians exchanged glances.

"You have seen enough. You had better come away now," they said.

But Felix got the better of his agitation speedily. Resolutely and half impatiently he trampled down the momentary weakness; drew himself away in an armour of reserve from their offered attention—stepped coolly back to the grating, and insisted on at least looking once again, as it was imperatively forbidden that he should enter the room. So he looked, long and steadily, on the brother who, absorbed in his imagined company, saw him not. Felix had been a boy when he saw his brother last. Yet now gradually from this altered face, with the wavering eyes and the

wild furtive glance, there grew the resemblance to the bright, handsome boy to whom he had bade a gay brotherly good-bye so many years ago. Glynnley had been his mother's pet—his mother's pride! And he was *here*! his blasted life locked in a living grave. At last, when the doctors dropped a hint that it was time, Felix turned to Dr. Starke and begged to accept the kind offer which had been made previously, of showing him over the asylum.

Dr. Starke was proud of his establishment; but he hesitated a moment.

"I should like to see it," persisted Felix quite placidly.

"Come, then. This way, if you please," said the doctor, unconsciously assuming the one and only air he always wore when, "showing visitors over" the place.

So Felix went through the various corridors, and saw the inmates of the cells, which cells in sober truth were tolerably comfortable little apartments; saw the "bad cases" through the little gratings in the doors, and "interviewed" the milder cases, and then was shown into the drawing-room where the mildest cases of all were amusing themselves with fancy work and a piano. Dr. Starke did host and guide; Dr. Fitzroy following as a sort of chorus.

In one room was a young woman nursing a battered doll, which she believed to be the child she had lost seven years before. And for those seven years she had never let this wooden image, with the paint worn off round its eyes and battered nose, grotesque in its ugliness, out of her arms. She sang to it, rocked it, cooed to it, hushed it to sleep, and any attempt to remove it or contradict her persuasion that it was indeed her child only roused her to fury. In another room an old man, with a long white beard, sat writing his own history. He believed himself to be the "Man in the Iron Mask," and the rightful heir to the throne of France. Then there was the lady who believed herself to be the Virgin Mary; there were two rival queens who had to be carefully kept apart, because neither would yield the reverence demanded by the other; and there was a gentleman who affirmed he was the Wandering Jew, and also the executioner of Charles the First, and related to every visitor diffused anecdotes of his adventurous life, or rather lives.

It was all unspeakably sad even in its occasional absurdity. The comedy of it was only Tragedy, holding a clown's mask up to screen her tears.

Felix walked through it all, quietly, watchfully, intently observant, half his thoughts fixed on the brother he had found so horribly worse than lost, and half on a girl's face in an old grey château, in France.

Before Dr. Fitzroy and Felix took their leave, they had a glass of wine with their host, and were invited to stay to dinner. Felix declined; Dr. Fitzroy accepted the invitation.

"I am sorry I cannot stay and share your hospitality. Dr. Starke. But it is impossible; for in spite of your courtesy and kindness this day has been a trying one to me."

The doctors were not much surprised to hear this, and murmured something politely sympathetic.

"You will not be surprised," added Felix simply and earnestly, "when I tell you that, if it were not for what I now know—if it were not for what I have seen to-day, I should have married—soon."

His quiet, steadfast voice faltered just a little on the last word.

When he had gone, said Dr. Starke to Dr. Fitzroy,

"Now will that young fellow have the pluck to do the only right thing?"

"Yes," Dr. Fitzroy replied.

Whether Felix Grey had or had not the courage to "take the right course," he knew full well where the right course lay, for him at least, holding as he did the theories and convictions which he would have scorned now to let go because the holding them stung his hand. Yet once more, in one attempt to persuade himself that he was still uncertain, dreaming for the first and last time that he might sway from the purpose that was already set, the next day he visited Dr. Fitzroy again. And when he left that house, after an hour's conversation, his face was calm in a settled sadness, noble in a fixed resolve.

He remembered how once, when he had had a fever, he had lain in delirium for many days, and how the friend who had watched by him had afterwards admitted to him that for a time the doctor had confessed to some fear as to whether he would return to his perfect senses, or awake with jarred and confused, if not shaken, intellect. He had not dwelt much on this at the time. Now he looked back to it, and it seemed to him clear as the light of day that then the family fiend was trying to get possession of him. He knew that it might yet renew the attack, and succeed. Had he not heard of such cases ere now? He knew that, if ever it did take possession of him, it might turn its fury on the very creature he would have died to save from harm.

Glynley's love for Rachel had not shielded *her*.

It was true that the horror he dreaded might never happen; the curse might pass him by; he might live with clear and undimmed intellect to the end of his days; his darling might be safe and sheltered in his care and love for all her life. But then—even then he might live to hear his children laugh the harsh and vacant laugh that had frozen his veins that day; and he thought how, if there be triumph in hell when man treads blindly over the pitfalls dug for him, the fiends must have laughed at the blithesome bridal of Glynley and Rachel Grey, who heard no mocking echo in the wedding music, and went blindfolded to their fate.

CHAPTER XI.

"SHADOWS THAT SHROUD THE TO-MORROW."

FELIX is coming home!

Calla's heart is singing these words all day, and beats sweeter music as afternoon wears on to evening, and

"Thinking this will please him best,
She takes a ribbon and a rose,
For he will see them on to-night!
And with the thought her colour burns,
And having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right."

He has written to say that this day he will be with them—written only a brief and hasty note to his mother; but as Calla has had a long, and loving, and happy letter from him only two or three days before, and as she will see him so soon now, she is not troubled because the post that brought his letter to Mrs. Darrell brought no letter or inclosure for her.

Twin roses of hope and joy are blooming on her cheeks, brighter even than that "last rose of summer" of which she has robbed the garden, to pin it in her hair—a rose of his favourite warm blush colour. And the ribbon matches the rose in hue, as the fair face harmonizes with it in its dewy freshness and pure loveliness. They are beautiful eyes that will "mark his coming, and shine brighter when he comes." Nor is the "honest watch-dog" wanting to make the welcome complete. There he is in the yard, with his head and two great fore-paws out of his kennel; "baying deep-mouthed" anticipatorily, as there is no sign of the expected arrival as yet.

They wait dinner for Felix, but he does not come.

Dinner is over; coffee is served and disposed of and taken away, and still no sign of him. Evening wears on, and the family give up the idea that he can have crossed by this boat, and observe, with habitual placidity, "Well, he will come by the next." Calla professes indifference, but her heart is sinking down in disappointment sad and sore, for that "next boat" means two long, long days of waiting:

Night is closing in; they have given up expecting him, and are leaving the *salon* where they have been loitering away the evening in the idleness always consequent upon expectance of a wanderer's arrival. Now they have all risen; Mr. Darrell is carefully placing a paper-knife in his book to mark the place where he left off; Calla is silent and abstracted; the glad sparkle has died out of her eyes,

and the faded rose has fallen from her hair unheeded. She is busy-ing herself shutting up the piano and putting away the music which Isabel has left open and scattered about, while Isabel gazes dreamily from the window up into the starlight. Then Mrs. Darrell turns out the lamp and extinguishes the light—just before the outer bell rings, and Marie-Rose's heavy sabots are heard clack-clacking across the court-yard to the gate.

"Who is it?"

"It is Felix!"

Calla flies out of the room and flings open the great hall-door and lets in the wanderer and a gust of autumn wind.

Yes, it is Felix at last.—Felix, looking pale and tired, and taking all welcomes and greetings, from Marie-Rose's voluble "Oh, que monsieur est bien venu!" to Calla's vivid blush and smile and eager outstretched hands, more quietly and with less responsive warmth than usual.

Calla feels her joy a little dashed somehow.

He had taken both her hands and pressed them closely and looked at her intently, but he has not seemed to feel the same delight that she feels in their meeting. He has smiled certainly, but it seemed rather a sad smile than a glad one. No doubt he was tired—tired, and very likely knocked up by the journey. But the bloom seems to be rubbed off from this return that was so eagerly anticipated.

"I'm awfully late, am I not, mother? You see the boat was delayed; engines broke down in mid-channel, no danger, you know, only kept us knocking about a long time. You were all going to bed? We'll, I'll go straight upstairs, too; it's been a tiring day. No, no supper, thanks, only a crust of bread and a glass of wine in my room."

So upstairs they all went, talking all the way up the stairs and in the passages, asking how he had been?—and wasn't he very tired?—and what made the engines break down; and was he *quite* sure he wouldn't have a cutlet? Strong-armed Claudine bore his port-manteau up to his room, and setting it by the doorway, stood smiling welcome with her hands tucked under her large white apron, and making her own inquiries as to "Monsieur Felix's" health, and remarks as regarded the duration of his absence. Monsieur Felix looked round his family circle with a forced sort of smile and an unexpressed, but ardent wish that they would leave him alone, or that some of them, at least, would do so.

"Here, don't let me keep you all up," he said rather brusquely. "Isabel is yawning, and looking sleepy. Good-night, Bell—run off, Calla," and he turned his eyes to her face with a sort of sad, reluctant softness, "you are tired?"

"Not a bit," said Calla, with a bright, wide-awake smile; but Isabel's retreat presently broke up the group.

"Mother, I want to see you for a few minutes to-night. Will you come back to me?" he said, in a grave half-whisper, as Mrs. Darrell and Calla turned to follow Mr. Darrell down the passage.

Mrs. Darrell looked startled—more startled, perhaps, than seemed natural or probable at so simple and natural a request. But she said,

"Certainly, my dear boy. I will come to you presently," and her long dress swept steadily over the bare oak floor, and the candle she carried flickered on the dark panelled walls as she passed on.

Calla lingered and looked back as she kissed her hand in a good-night. Standing in the half-open doorway of her room, with her hand on the latch, she looked back again. She saw that Felix was still standing at his door; and he saw her light figure pausing, dimly outlined in the shadows of the recess of hers.

There was a small stone balcony to the window that lit the landing and staircase, and this window was open—it was nearest to Felix's room, and he had bade Marie-Rose leave it alone, and said he would shut it presently. He looked at Calla's white ghostly figure glancing back at him, and stepped out from his door and closed it behind him, and went out on to the little balcony of the corridor, still looking at her. She obeyed the silent summons promptly.

"Wait for me a minute or two, Bella," she said, frankly and coaxingly, to Isabel, who was languidly combing out her golden hair, and preparing for their usual midnight girlish confidential talk.

Calla went swiftly down the corridor, and stepped out on the balcony without speaking. She laid her hand on her lover's shoulder, and looked at him for a minute, as if waiting for him to speak. Then she said,

"Felix, is anything the matter?"

"Why do you ask that, Calla?" he returned in a quiet, subdued voice.

"You were somehow not like yourself when you first came in. Are you quite well, Felix dear, or is there anything wrong?"

"I have something to say to you, Calla, but it will be to-morrow. It is late, and I cannot say all I have to say to-night."

"There is something wrong," she said earnestly, in low tones, gazing steadily at him, although in the dim light she could scarcely read his face. "Is there any news, any bad news, of my father?—or auntie?" she added quickly.

"No—no harm or loss to you or yours. It is between you and me the shadow falls," he said, and lifted his hand to the hand of hers that rested on his shoulder. At first it seemed as if the impulse were to move her hand gently away from him, but then as he touched her fingers his hand closed on them and held them there, quietly, steadfastly, with no tremor nor passion, but a firm, calm pressure.

"But what—*what could* come between us?" she asked almost under her breath.

"When I left you last, my Calla, I too should have said 'What could?' But now I know."

"What is it, dearest? Tell me," she whispered, clinging to him with a sudden wild anxiety, as if some fear of being torn apart from him seized her for the first time, flinging her arms about his neck as she besought him with all her loving soul in her eyes—"tell me!"

"To-morrow, darling. Leave me now," he said, in a voice subdued and a little shaken by love and bitter sorrows; and very tenderly he unclasped her clinging arms, and holding both her hands, raised them to his lips.

"I cannot wait till to-morrow; I cannot bear the night through!" she cried.

"Yes, you can bear it, my brave, true Calla; you can bear it when I entreat you to do so for my sake. It is not without reason, not without good cause that I say I cannot tell you what I have to say to you to-night. To-morrow. But now, don't think I am not suffering, Calla—leave me now."

He felt he could not trust himself longer to keep the resolution and self-control he had sworn to himself to observe. And Calla felt that whatever this mystery might be, reason and right were ever, *must* be ever, on his side. No doubt nor suspicion, no wonder as to whether he was to blame, ever crossed her mind for a moment; she only listened with pained and wondering, startled, loving eyes—listened and obeyed his wish with the implicit and loyal obedience of a nature strong and brave.

It is the weak woman who resists, and rebels, and cries out against the conduct she does not comprehend; the strong and trustful accepts it in silence, perplexed, but never doubting, and leaves in loyal faith the veil she may not lift, secure that it is not drawn in shame or fear, for the very soul of true love is Trust.

Felix bent his head and kissed again the two small cold hands he held. Then he drew a deep breath and let them loose from his, and turned his head away; and Calla, cold at the heart, but not breathing a sigh nor speaking a word, silent as hopelessness is ever silent, moved away and left him there.

He had only pressed his lips to her fingers. All that evening he had never kissed her. The absence of that parting and meeting caress struck to Calla's heart a deeper chill of hopelessness, a more painful bewilderment than even his words. It seemed a seal upon some secret bond that signed him away from her for ever. She did not analyze her feelings, and no doubt it was an unreasonable instinct—a girl's fear and fancy—but it seemed to her as though

the absence of that good-night kiss were the forerunner of an irrevocable parting—the opening of a gulf that was to widen, and widen, and widen away until eternity, and never close again.

It was not dread that Calla felt, it was certainty, certainty of some bitter grief to come, and to come soon. But it seemed to her that that grief could not be worse than this foreboding; she felt like one hanging over the brink of some awful precipice, who longs to hasten the moment of his fall, feeling it will be less terrible than the suspense.

"*How* would the night pass? Would the morrow never come?"

Isabel was amazed and distressed by the change in Calla, when, after those few minutes' absence, the girl returned, pale and tearless, and like one stunned by some painful bewilderment. But Isabel could not quite make out what it was that was the matter, and she went to sleep with a vague idea that Felix had been dreadfully melancholy and mysterious, and an indefinite trust that everything would come all right to-morrow.

Meanwhile Mrs. Darrell, after half-an-hour or so—"a few minutes" at La Basse Rive always meant half-an-hour—had returned to her son, according to his request.

"Well, Felix, what is it you have to say to me?" she asked, in carefully measured and tranquil accents, that scarcely harmonized with a suppressed anxiety in her eyes.

"Something that I am afraid will pain you, mother."

"What is it?" she asked quietly, almost under her breath.

"I have discovered the sad story that you have all my life concealed from me. By a strange chance I have seen"—he hesitated, reluctant to wound her—"I have seen him who—"

As he paused, she uttered a faint, sharp cry; piteous in its faintness, it seemed of utter terror and anguish.

"Who?—who?" she gasped. "Can the sea give up its dead?"

"The fate I have seen is sadder than death," said Felix. "Mother, I understand now your agitation—it perplexed me then—when I told you that Calla and I loved each other."

"That you and Calla loved each other," she repeated slowly, staring at him with a wild fixity—was it incomprehension or an awful questioning?—in her gaze. "Yes, I remember—it was—only the other day," she added, in the same strange manner. "But I—I—don't yet understand. Felix, *what--who* is it you have seen?"

"Mother," he said, watching her anxiously, to see how plainly he might venture to speak, "are you strong enough? You can bear to hear that I have seen—my brother—Glynnley?"

At that word Mrs. Darrell shrank almost as if he had struck her; her whole frame seemed to droop and collapse, as she buried her face deep in her hands, as if to hide herself away from his eyes.

"Where? How?" she said, in a stifled whisper, after a silence that seemed long, brief though it was.

"At the asylum."

"Who—who told you—that he was not dead?"

"Mere chance. An accidental meeting with Dr. Fitzroy—a few words dropped casually."

"And you have seen him?" she said, lifting her face and looking at him half shrinkingly. "Did he know you?"

"No," Felix answered gravely.

There was a silence again, during which she seemed to gather herself together, and collect her thoughts; then he said, quietly enough as to tone, but with an outburst of earnestness he could not repress,

"Mother, for God's sake tell me—*why* have you kept this from me?"

Before this question her composure wavered and failed. Under the disclosure that the skeleton she had so long and sedulously, and until now so successfully, concealed from her husband, her daughter, and her son, had by strange chance been suddenly unveiled to the latter's eyes—in his presence, knowing now that he knew the hidden story, her rare tears burst forth.

She was sorely shaken. The cold, calm, stately woman, with her slow, soft accents, her tender, tranquil ways, whom the world knew as Mrs. Darrell—whom even her nearest and dearest seldom saw otherwise than as she seemed, nor ever knew as she was—had vanished. The true and fatal weakness of her nature bared itself to the light. She stood there a frail and trembling creature, still longing to turn away from the truth, vainly putting out her hands to push away the shadow of the past, passion breaking up her usual quietude, weakness forcing its way to the surface through the surface strength.

Yet though the inner nature betrayed itself now, it was never wholly revealed. Though weak, she was not wavering. Too fixed in her uncommunicativeness, too impenetrable in her reserve, her only strength in her secrecy, even where her self-control broke down, her reticence lasted still. It was not a mere superficial mask, that might slip aside—it was ingrained in her very nature; in her sufferings as in her joys, in all but her maternal love, her heart was as a sealed book always.

She never lost a certain keen and cautious consciousness of external circumstances and calculation on present risks, no matter what emotion swayed, or what memories moved her. Even now she was thoughtful enough to fear lest her prolonged absence should arouse Mr. Darrell's attention, lest in curiosity or anxiety, he should come to seek her, and lest any vague suspicions of any con-

cealment might be aroused in him by finding her at that hour talking to Felix, pale and unnerved, and with the fresh traces of tears on her cheeks.

So the interview between the mother and son was brief.

"To-morrow, Felix—I will speak to you to-morrow—I *must* leave you now," she said.

Yet brief as their conversation this night was, it still lasted long enough for Felix to read the key to his mother's cruel kindness and scarcely less than criminal concealment, to perceive that, although the instinct of secrecy in her was innate and strong, yet it was far less for her own than for her idolized daughter's sake that she had concealed, evaded and built around that tragic secret of the family history, this house of cards that a breath might any day level to the ground.

He understood now her hidden melancholy. He traced, or thought he could trace, it to its root; he saw how she must have lived under the shadow of a perpetual fear, and his heart was sore for her as well as for himself. He could not help blaming her secrecy, but he pitied her years of anxiety and her suffering now with all his heart. And he looked forward with scarcely less pain, if with more courage, than she did, to the interview that was to be on the morrow, and the words which he had made up his mind to plainly say, and by which he would firmly hold.

There was not much sound sleep at La Basse-Rive that night. Calla lay awake and restless, counting the hours in feverish watchfulness, wondering what the morrow would bring, until long after daylight, fairly tired out, she fell into an uneasy doze. Felix slept, because his active, roving life had inured him to sleep at all hours and in all circumstances, under all sorts of mental or physical suffering. But Mrs. Darrell never closed her eyes—she lay all night in a vigil more painful even than one spent by a dying bed, her brain throbbing with bitterer thoughts and darker memories and sharper stabs of sorrow than even Felix dreamed.

There was no such institution as a real family breakfast at the Château de la Basse-Rive. Everybody had coffee in their rooms whenever they wanted it, and there was no general assembly called until the mid-day meal, which was known as *déjeuner*, but which answered to the English lunch, and was served at any time between twelve and two, according to Marie-Rose's will and pleasure, and quite independently of any other influence. The lateness of this general meeting was perhaps fortunate this day, or at least several people thought it so who were not inclined to the ordeal of an early public appearance with tired eyes and pale cheeks and an abstracted air.

Mr. Darrell went out early, immediately after his morning cup of coffee, and his wife hardly knew whether she was glad or sorry—

she knew she must prepare to speak to Felix now; she would be glad to get it over; yet she could not have resisted an opportunity of putting it off awhile, had such an opportunity been offered her by Mr. Darrell's staying by her side reading to her, or asking her to sit in the orchard with him that morning,

But Mr. Darrell, all unsuspectingly, went out for his long constitutional walk, and left his wife to face the brown eyes, so like hers, in which she read reproach, though no reproach was meant or spoken, alone. To-day, however, Mrs. Darrell was herself again. She had regained her equanimity; she even met him with something of her usual calm and queenly air. She had been taken off her guard, startled, and unprepared, the previous night. Now she had had time to think; and the veil that never wholly and utterly lifted was drawn closely round her again.

"I will not pain you, mother, by many words on this subject," Felix said very gently and gravely. "But one thing I must say at once. Calla must know the reason of the breaking of our engagement."

"Felix, why dig up the dead? Why drag the skeleton that was buried long ago to the surface now?" his mother said. "Why lay all our peace, all our comfort, in ruins—and all for what?—to what good end?"

"To the end of truth and right. For one thing, Calla must know—has a right to know—the reason of our parting. She must know that it is for her sake, and for the sake of a duty there is no evading. For another thing, Isabel should know—should know now, while she has no dear and special hopes that the knowledge would blight. Will you keep her in the cruel ignorance in which I was kept, and let the truth burst upon her one day when she is unprepared, and kill her dearest hopes, as it has killed mine?"

"Why need she ever know? There is no sign, no symptom of the malady in her—you know there is not!" said Mrs. Darrell, her eyes wavering away from his, her true weakness betraying itself, even now that her usual composure wrapped her round.

"There was none in Glynneley—I remember well."

"No; ah, that is true!" and she shrank as if in pain as the whole tragedy flashed before her mind's eye. "But Isabel will not marry. See how secluded she lives here!"

"She is the surer to love the first man who brings a light and a change into her monotonous life. How can you guarantee that she will not marry? It is better to let her bear the blow now than when it will strike her deeper."

"I cannot tell her—I will not! It has been hard enough on me. How can you ask me to throw so cruel a shadow over my child's young, happy life?" she said, with the same mistaken tenderness and instinctive secrecy and shrinking from giving pain that had

led her to allow the marriage between Glynneley and Rachel without a word of warning, and to conceal all along the terrible hereditary taint, which had in one case at least been too clearly proven, from those who had the best right to know it. "Can one *never* outlive one's past?" she asked, lifting her head with a gesture of bitter melancholy that was yet haughty—a sort of defiant sadness, that wished the past undone, and still rather rebelled against than bent before reproach, looking, in her scarcely-faded autumn beauty and grace, as grand and pathetic a figure as a fallen queen might look when unjustly taunted with a long-forgotten and expiated sin.

"Not such a past as this," said Felix sadly. "It lives again. It does not die even with our death."

"All my life has been storm and shipwreck," she said gloomily. "All, from the outset of the voyage even to the very end."

"Poor mother!" he said, laying his hand on hers. "But," he added gently, and carefully avoiding the faintest accent of reproach, "this sorrow touches us all—*now*."

She looked searchingly in his face.

"You are resolutely bent on breaking off your engagement to Calla?" she said.

"I have no choice—it must be," he answered briefly.

Mrs. Darrell was silent. Her eyes were fixed upon him with a strange, unfathomable, seeking gaze. Was she watching to trace if there were a look of his brother in him?

"You must have known, mother," he continued after a pause, "what my only course of conduct could be when this came to my knowledge. It was this thought surely that distressed you so when I came to tell you about Calla—you remember?"

"Yes," she said slowly, her pale face turning whiter than ever, "I remember."

"I had no dream of anything like this, then," he added, looking away abstractedly, as that happy hour of hope flashed into his mind—how long ago it seemed! "I wonder you did not rejoice more with me. I knew you loved her too. I recollect that even some foolish fancy about that Australian paper you have been reading crossed my mind. I was so far from the truth."

His mind's eye was looking back into that hour; he was not observing her face as she answered him, with a touch of something like concealed bitterness,

"Yes, so far from the truth. What could an old Australian paper have to do with you and Calla?"

"Calla!" he said, echoing the word half unconsciously. He loved the sound, yet it stung him now sharply as fire. "I have not told her yet—that must be done. She will feel it," he murmured, as much to himself as to his mother, "and I might have saved her

from it—I might have spared her this, if I had only known a little while ago—a few weeks only. If I had but known before that morning, *she* need never have been troubled."

"You are thinking of Calla," she said painfully, "and I—I thought of Isabel. It was for her sake all along—more, far more than for my own. Listen, Felix; you shall hear how it was, and understand, if you cannot sympathize. Think how lonely I was, how helpless, how tempted to keep a silence that, once kept, I could not break! I stood alone," she continued, her voice full of repressed emotion as she pleaded her cause as if not only with him, but with her own conscience, with justice, human and divine—"alone! Glynnley lost to me in a loss so worse than death; you far away—too far to help me, or even to know my trouble—perhaps, if you had not left me, things might have been different; and Isabel a child at school, away from me—the name Grey so common—the story so hushed up. So few people knew it, and those were secret and discreet, I knew. Fate seemed to be on my side, and helped me to conceal it." Colonel Fitzgerald went back to India, and died there. The world is wide—how many a secret is safely lost and hidden in it! Why should I have let my poor little Isabel know?—why make her the talk of her schoolmates, and blight her youth? She was so bright and lovely a child!"

"But Mr. Darrell?" questioned Felix.

"I was trying to outlive and forget it when Mr. Darrell met me first. You remember that at first he was only a stranger who had no claim on my confidence, and afterwards I could not bear to tell him the story—it killed me to allude to it, or even think of it at all. It has broken my heart to tear open the old wounds again now. Do you think I *could* speak of it and to *him*?" she asked, in a tone as if of justly wounded surprise. "And he was kind to Isabel," she continued, "and we were so poor. All my money had gone—that terrible time. Life was such a struggle. I saw the prospect of a home, education, good provision for *her*; and *he*, like me, wanted no more of society and cities—wanted only to live out of the dreadful world in peace. Then, having once concealed that story, I had sealed my lips for ever."

"Yes, I understand," said Felix. "It was that one first step, as it always is."

"He is very good; you know how good he really is, Felix; but I know him best. I know he would be as stern and unforgiving, if he once deemed himself deceived in any way, as he is kind and good now. Then, too, I found that he had a particular horror of—of insanity; you have heard him say so often? But it was too late to go back then, and now he would never, never forgive me for having kept this secret from him; I should read estrangement from me and from my darling in his eyes. For myself I do not care!

but my Isabel shall not live under cold and suspicious looks, nor have a perpetual watch kept over her, and her fanciful ways and her little wilfulnesses carped at and twisted into horrible misinterpretations. No, Felix, I tell you, the secret I have kept successfully for so long shall be kept to the end."

"Not from her who has a claim to know it now that Fate has forced it into my knowledge," he replied steadily. He was hard to her perhaps; but if he were inflexible to others, he never spared himself. "Mother," he continued, "dare you open-eyed resolve—to save Isabel a pang now—to run the risk of plunging her into tenfold bitterer grief some day? For some day, keep Isabel secluded here as you will, fence her round against all thoughts of love and marriage as best you may, still some day Nature *will have its way*, and she will plan out a happy future for herself; and some day Fate *will have its way*, and the story you should have told her long ago will come out."

"What is it, Felix?" said a quiet voice very softly, and Mrs. Darrell turned, with a start and cry, as pale as ashes. Isabel had come with her noiseless step along the grassy border outside the window, and as the sun slanted in the contrary direction, no shadow of her slight figure had fallen upon them until they saw her there. They were both silent, only Felix stretched out his arm and took his sister's hand and drew her gently towards their mother.

"What story is it that is to be told to me?" asked Isabel again gravely, but with her normal tranquillity quite unruffled by any apparent agitation.

"Mother, you see that Fate speaks with me—adds its decree to my entreaty. You must tell Isabel this sad story; and you, do not think me cruel, little sister, for forcing you to hear it. It is far, far best you should hear it now; it cannot blight your life with the same blight it throws over mine. Where is Calla?" added Felix, as Isabel drew to her mother's side, with a sort of strengthening, comforting, protecting look that seemed to make the mother and daughter change places, and the child uphold the parent. Isabel's large, grave, grey eyes were sad, and surprised, and bewildered, but loving and loyal above all.

"Calla is in the study," she said.

Mrs. Darrell rose up, holding Isabel's hand, and as if she gained more strength from that clasp, she stood there unwavering erect, her eyes fixed with strange intentness on Felix's face. She looked as though she saw something beyond, as though, during those few moments of silence, her whole life stood still.

At last with a sort of shuddering sigh, the sigh that bursts from the heart when a mighty battle has been fought there—is it the last wail of the vanquished force or the gasp of relief from the victorious?—she said,

"Yes, Fate speaks with you, Felix; it's too late now—for you—and me—and all of us. Do what you will; your future is your own." She paused with a look of half defiant pain, as if she trampled down some last lingering spark of life from some scruple or regret. "But if you *will* take Calla into your confidence, one thing I charge you," she added with all her old imperial calm of bearing, "bind her to secrecy! Calla is loyal and true. She will keep the secrecy I demand; she can, and *must*! Now all has been said, Felix—leave Isabel alone with me."

CHAPTER XII.

"THE WATERS OF BLISS ARE A WASTE OF BITTERNESS."

FELIX found Calla sitting by the study-window, leaning her cheek upon her hand in a compelled patience, waiting for him, waiting for the interview he had promised, knowing surely he would be with her soon, half longing for, and yet half dreading, the moment when he should come.

She did not rise as he entered, but only looked up at him, in a mute anxiety and wonder and questioning; she knew there was no need to press the inquiry into whatever truth had to be told, now that the time had come to hear it. It struck him how one night of anxiety had altered her; and yet with her brightness clouded and her fresh fairness seeming somehow suddenly faded, she was dearer and lovelier than ever in his eyes.

She was pale and worn with want of sleep, and the feverish suspense that is harder to bear than sorrow; the lids seemed to droop heavily over the dark eyes, and under them there lay the purple shadows that tell always so sure a tale of vigilance, unrest, and pain. Then, too, whereas lately, and especially this last happy summer, she had learned to prize her own beauty, and to delight in apparelling it daintily, and framing it in the fairest setting, this morning she had so utterly forgotten to think of her own appearance or of herself altogether, that she was again the old careless Calla of her early girlhood, the child he used to know, so gaily heedless of her torn frocks and patched mantles, and her always wandering locks of hair.

To-day again, as of old, she had hastily twisted up all that dark, abundant hair into a great loose knot; she had hurried on a loose cambric morning-dress; there were none of the usual dainty gleams of bright ribbon shining about her, nor the simple ornaments that add a touch of completion to every beauty. Carelessness and un-

tidiness were no more becoming to her than they are to most women ; but as she looked up at him then, pale, heavy-eyed, and carelessly dressed, she seemed the fairest and the loveliest,

" For good or ill, the world's one woman ! "

to Felix Grey.

He laid his hand on the rough, dark waves of hair that were so hurriedly knotted up, and looked down upon her with earnest, renouncing eyes, that mutely took their farewell. And she, looking silently up into his face, before ever a word was spoken, read parting in his sad gaze ; and though yet she did not know what possible cause for parting there could be, knew well that a parting hour was looming up terribly dark and close before them.

Then Felix told her all that he had learnt, told her truthfully, briefly, steadily, the terrible tragedy of his brother's life, and his own conviction as to the curse that overhung the race and doomed them to live unmated and alone.

For although love might take possession of Felix's heart, and reign over his soul to the ruin of his every hope and happiness, though love might blight the joys of his life to the very root, its sway ceased there ; it could never tempt him into a marriage he deemed a sin. Between him and Calla the severance must be utter and final now, he knew. Back into the old tender and close and familiar friendship they could not lapse, as if this dream of love had never been. He knew his own heart and hers too well to think of such a possibility.

He had all the nobler qualities as well as the failings of a nature tenacious even to obstinacy, true even to hardness, able to sacrifice inflexibly its own and other's hopes to its stern doctrine of duty ; the same nature that makes the martyrs whom, whether or not we hold their creed or follow their cause, we dare not insult with our shallow pity, but before whose fate we must bend the knee in reverence.

He was too clear-sighted, too keen of perception and strong of resolve, to resort to that self-jugglery wherewith again and again men and women have conjured love into the guise of friendship, and—unlike other tricksters—have deceived the world far less than they deluded themselves. Though the world is prone enough to believe in the transformation of friendship into love, and even quite willing to be deluded by such an assumption, yet it resolutely, and in most cases, wisely, refuses to believe in the reverse transformation. An old love may trick itself out in the feathers of a new friendship, may delude itself into the faith that with its outer form it has changed its inner spirit. The eyes of the world, for once seeing true, pierce through the disguise and trace the eternal features under the mask.

Felix knew the danger of playing with fire; and his resolution that they should carry on no such hazardous game was strong, for Calla's sake even more than for his own.

He told her all. The case was clear. The curse of hereditary insanity, whether apparent or not, hung in all its fearful possibilities over the children of Matthew Grey. The duty was clear, on each member of that ill-fated family, to lead a single life and let the curse die out. Besides, the terrible tragedy of Glynnley's marriage and his young wife's fate was a lurid beacon-light that blazed to warn them off the shore that looked so fair.

It was all quite clear to Calla, and yet she cried in a vain appeal that she knew was hopeless—

"Felix, Felix, if I have no fear—if I have no fear at all, *must* we part?"

"Darling, we must," he said steadily. "We must, and it must be a parting as irrevocable as death. As far as the hopes and dreams we had of each other a week ago are concerned, we are dead to each other, Calla, dead from this hour."

She looked up in his face with a dumb, heart-broken, piteous look, and yet a settled hopelessness that accepted her fate.

"How shall I live without you?" she said drearily, the words breaking half unconsciously from her lips.

And yet, in that moment, in the utter misery of a hopeless farewell, Calla knew—knew by sure intuition and instinct—that she should "get over it;" knew, that is to say, that it would not kill her, that she would certainly not have brain fever, and probably not go off in an early consumption; more than that, that she would very likely live many, many years, and "do as the world doth, say as it saith," would walk in the ways of pleasure, and wear a smiling face, and show no scar to the world's eyes to tell of the wound that pierced her heart to-day. She felt in these very moments, and felt with no sense of relief, but rather with an added bitterness to her pain, that blows like these do not kill, when one is young and healthy, and with no tendency to heart-disease.

There are fragile and delicate ones who fall at the first hard blow they meet in the great battle-field of life; but Calla knew she was not one of those, and that for her the fight was only now begun. She had a sort of vision, swift as a flash of light, of the life that lay before her—a terrible vision it seemed, of dreary days stretching out into dreary weeks, interminable months and desolate years—all empty of love, no Felix by her side. Months without him, years without him: life, long life itself, without him!

Looking on this vision, great tears gathered slowly in Calla's eyes, and dimmed and brimmed over the long black lashes.

"My little Calla!" he said sadly. "I would have given my heart's blood to save you from a day's sorrow! And it is I myself

who bring grief and trouble upon you! That was the last thing of which I ever dreamt—that *I* should bring you sorrow—I who would have shielded you from every care!"

Calla shivered as these few last words of his cut into her heart like a knife—the contrast between the dream of a week ago and the harsh reality of to-day! Life "shielded by his care!" and life without him! She shuddered and winced as if with actual physical pain, and caught her breath with a deep irrepressible sob, and first half shrank away from him, and then turned, and with a sort of abandonment of love and longing and despair flung herself upon his breast, and buried her face upon his shoulder to hide her tears.

Felix turned very pale, and clenched his hands till he drove his nails into the palm. It was a hard trial that she should grieve, and grieving cling to him, whose faith was pledged to bid her grieve and rejoice alone, henceforth. But he closed his lips tight and would not speak at all until he could speak steadily; he folded his arms round her, but only in protecting tenderness as if she had been a sorrowing child; he held himself in stern self-control for her sakes and for the sake too of his resolution. Because to let loose the feelings that struggled under the iron curb of will that crushed and forced them down were to agitate *her* cruelly and to put that resolution to almost too severe a test for mortal will to endure.

"Do not cry, my darling," he said, at last, steadily and tenderly, when he had mastered himself. "We shall outlive the pain of this parting; and you will find some other happiness one day. You are young—ah, so young and bright, my Calla-lily! Life holds so much for you. You are, you were always, brave and strong——"

"I am brave enough to endure—to dare—anything—anything! for you and with you," she said, with a passionate sob.

"And you are brave enough, dearest, I know well, to endure without me when it is for my sake—to save me from yielding to a temptation whose strength you—you cannot know!" and his resolute voice lowered and paused, as if he could not quite surely trust it. "You are strong enough to help me in a resolution that is hard to hold. Love is forbidden fruit to me from this day forth. All possibilities of marriage are struck out of my life for ever. It is hard enough on me—Calla! don't make it harder still! Help me, rather; help me to be strong!"

He had struck the right chord now.

She lifted her head from his breast.

"You need no help to be strong and brave and true!" she said, her eyes glistening through their tears, proudly, passionately, lovingly. "Felix, you are right! Good-bye! this is good-bye. And I shall never—never in all my life be false or weak or cowardly, having once been loved by you!"

"God's best blessings be on you ever, darling! May the powers

that made you pure and brave and loyal and lovely make you happy too !”

There were but a few more words spoken ; a few more moments of silence that seemed long as Life and bitter as Death. Then Felix said—

“ Calla, it is useless to prolong this interview—it is needless pain to both of us. The time has come that we had better say good-bye ! Yet—a moment—one—one last kiss ! ”

“ Then, like those who clench their nerves to rush
Upon their dissolution, they two rose—
Then closing like an individual life
In one blind cry of passion and of pain,
Caught up the whole of Love and uttered it,
And bade adieu for ever.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ SHUT ARE THE SUMMER'S GOLDEN GATES.”

Mrs. DARRELL had consented that Isabel and Calla should know the family secret, or rather she had been reluctantly overborne into allowing them to know it. But she was unbending on one point—that of this story her husband should never know one word. And, to say the truth, no one tried to shake her resolve, for none were anxious to force the truth upon him, and thus shatter the last relic of peace and comfort in the household. Felix asserted that he must return to London on business, important literary business, which had allowed him merely a day or two to visit his family, and then compelled his return. He had himself arranged this speedy return before leaving London ; but the responsibility of his brief visit was shifted to his editor's shoulders for presentation to his stepfather's eyes.

Calla was to stay on at the Château, as there were all reasons against her quitting it. Isabel protested she would not and could not part from Calla ; Mr. Darrell would have objected to and wondered at her going, and perhaps become inconveniently inquisitive as to its cause. Mrs. Darrell found Calla's presence—sympathetic, tender, and unobtrusive as it was—far more a comfort than a pain, for she loved the frank-hearted girl perhaps next best to her darling Isabel. It is also possible that she deemed that under her own eye Calla's discretion and reserve would be put to less severe a test than away from her. Then there was nowhere for Calla to go, except to her aunt in Scotland ; and last, not least, as concerned the girl's own feelings, she yielded unreluctantly and freely to the arrange-

ment that "of course her home was still with them." With the exceptions of her father, who was far away, her "auntie," who was practically out of reach just then, and a few pleasant but shallow friendships in that bright Bohemian "clique" in London, Calla's affections and associations all centred in the Château de la Basse-Rive. She had no wish to leave it—it would only have been an added pain. So all arrangements stood in their old form, as though that short summer day of love had never dawned and set.

Mr. Darrell must of course know that the engagement between Felix and Calla was broken off; but as it had never been actually and formally announced to the world in general as an openly settled thing, as it had only been an affair of a few weeks, and as he looked down at youth and love and spring as late autumn does often look—not contemptuously, but quite uncomprehendingly—it would not be a difficult thing to make him receive the alteration of the arrangement as a natural change enough, whose motive it would be waste of time to inquire too deeply into. Young people mistook their own minds sometimes, and little tiffs and jealousies and estrangements came between them. It was difficult exactly to follow love affairs on their own level. It was best to let young folks settle their own affairs.

"And after all, my dear, you know I never thought they were very well suited to each other," Mrs. Darrell observed serenely.

So the volcano overflowed quietly on one side only, and no open and universal explosion took place, and the household gods were not shivered.

Everybody except Mr. Darrell was miserable, and poor unsuspecting Mr. Darrell was deluded by an epidemic of colds and neuralgia which were invented and referred to as satisfactorily accounting for pale cheeks, heavy eyes, or anxious looks. It was a habit at La Basse-Rive to regard hot coffee as a panacea for every ill; and during this period many were the cups of that fragrant beverage which at all sorts of uncanonical hours were sent up to Mademoiselle and Madame, and administered as a restorative by one sympathetic spirit to another.

Calla thought during the day or two that Felix, for appearance's sake and by his mother's request, stayed on at La Basse-Rive, that to bear his presence under the new circumstances was a far bitterer trial than to bear his entire absence would be.

To see him almost hourly, yet never to see him alone—to speak to him with the sense of a crushing iron restraint holding them apart, in place of the old fearless and free familiarity—to know by the certain instinct that never misleads that he was looking at her with sad and tender eyes, yearning to soothe the sorrow that showed no outward sign, but that he knew lay heavy at the guileless girlish heart—yet not to dare to turn and meet his look—to feel that the

gulf between them was silently, imperceptibly, inexorably, and for ever widening, and that all their mutual love must never bridge it over now—all this seemed bitterer to her than utter separation from him could ever be.

She did not have it long to endure; he only stayed on a day or two for form's sake. And during that brief time, whatever Calla felt, no one was made aware of it. In the presence of her friends, for their sakes as well as for her own, she kept bravely up that semblance of calmness and even of gaiety of which under some circumstances the weakest woman-child is capable. She stood forward to screen her secret heart, eagerly, successfully, as though an undiscovered sin had been lurking there. She smiled with even the old light in her eyes; she laughed, and the laugh rang true in every note, when her only inclination was to fling herself down alone in her room and cry her heart out. The effort was an unceasing strain; but of nerve and spirit as she was, she could have borne a hundredfold more. Mr. Darrell observed with mild satisfaction that she evidently did not mind the alteration of arrangement much. Mrs. Darrell read the girl's heart more truly; but even she looked on Calla as a child, the depths of whose nature—if there *were* any depths—had not been fathomed.

Before Felix went, he saw her alone for just a few minutes, and said to her, holding both her hands in the close, but calm parting clasp of friendship,

"Calla, remember my last word to you, my last wish is—Be happy; don't fret for me! I can bear my own burden, child," he added earnestly and tenderly; "but I could not bear it patiently if I thought I had clouded your young life for more than the clouds and showers of an April day."

Calla did not protest; she looked at him with no deprecation nor reproach in her eyes, so sad and longing and loving, yet so resigned and resolute, that he drew a quick breath and glanced away.

"You must be happy, dear; you must forget."

"No, Felix, no! I can bear it. But I could not bear it if I thought I should forget."

"Then, remember, dear. Remember all that is a comfort and a strength. Forget all that is trouble and pain."

And these were Felix's last words to Calla. He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it and left her. And when he so left her, Antony's farewell to Cleopatra flashed across her mind,

"I am dying, Egypt, dying; yet
I here importune death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips."

These words, that recurred involuntarily to Calla's mind, branded themselves in her memory that day, for ever associated—however

causelessly and strangely—with Felix's farewell. And it seemed to her an added anguish that he should have left her for ever, and on those lips that had quivered in the pain of parting, laid no "poor last" of many kisses.

She went on by herself when he had gone; she could not bear the presence of any one—not even Isabel. She wandered about the orchard, muttering to herself, "The last! the last!" And she recollected so vividly their last ramble in the orchard a few weeks ago, and said—

"The blackberries are ripe. I told him—'The blackberries will be ripe when you come again.' And they are ripe, and he is come and gone!"

The autumn sun smiled heartlessly bright, and lit up a pretty, simple, every-day picture of a young girl, looking abstractedly up at the topmost branch of the briery hedge—only a pretty girl, alone in an orchard with a pretty background of autumn-tinted foliage—only a girl mourning in bitterness of spirit over the grave of her first-born and fairest hope.

When we see such we do not know them generally. They don't wear mourning; and we see them embroidering or singing, or potting flowers, or trimming a dress, with voices no less steady, and fingers no less skilful, than usual; we meet them walking with light, firm step, and eyes undimmed by tears; and there is nothing to tell us they are mourning over a new-made grave.

Calla, though her face was paler than its wont, and her eyes wore a tired look, made as pretty a picture of a graceful, girlish figure as ever those overarching boughs had framed in against the russet hedge. Her cheek was stained by no tear-traces now. She felt as if in the last few days she had wept away all her tears, and had none left to shed evermore. One cannot weep for ever, and one must sometimes laugh.

Even on this very day of Felix's departure Calla laughed when Isabel—evidently deeming this a suitable occasion for the administration of the panacea—met her at the door with a cup of steaming coffee.

"Why, Bell, I believe you think it's infallible for all the ills that spirit and flesh are heir to! No, I've not been crying. I've not had the slightest inclination to fainting. Don't look at me as if you expected to find me with a willow wreath ostentatiously twisted round my brow. We don't wear them outside nowadays."

Felix was gone, and when he was really gone, Calla found out that the weary ache of his absence was harder to bear than the feverish pain of his presence during those last few days.

Why do we all cry, "Any pain but this I could have borne!" when we know that in any other sorrow our cry would have been exactly the same?

The surface of life at the Château de la Basse-Rive flowed on un-

changed, but the depths were stirred and troubled now. The surface was all peace, but below there was no peace. Mrs. Darrell, although externally, and even to her husband's eye she seemed serene and placid as ever, could not get over the shock that the breaking open of the old grave, the resurrection of the old sorrow, had been to her. She could not forget that it was now known not only to her, but to the two girls, although the subject was never alluded to before her. She could not sink back into peace again now, knowing that the cloud had darkened the hitherto fair horizon of her darling's life; for even when Isabel's smile was as sunny as ever, the mother knew the cloud was always and for ever there.

The two girls, who had always been congenial friends and companions, were drawn together in a closer sympathy than ever now. They were sad, and they did not conceal from each other that they were sad. When alone with Isabel, Calla let the strain of assumed cheerfulness relax. They were merry together by fits and flashes, and both knew equally well that this mutual gaiety was a hollow thing.

"You are not going to stay with your aunt, are you?" said Isabel to Calla one day, when there had been letters from the aunts. "I shall brood and brood, and mope myself to death, or worse, if you leave me alone."

"I'm so glad I can be something to somebody," said Calla, not smiling, and looking sadly far away out of the window, but speaking in tones that rang clear and true, and laying her hand caressingly on Isabel's shoulder. She was sad that day; there had been no letter from her father, as she had expected, and her spirits, that came and went more capriciously now, were rather at a low ebb. "And it is a comfort, a great comfort to me, to be with you. We should mope alone, I'm sure. See, Bell dear, what I've been thinking is—we *must not* think—we must work and study. Let us be busy; there is plenty for us to do; let us work at something *hard*."

"Yet let us think, Calla," said Isabel, in her slow, dreamy way. "Where's the use of trying to drive away thought? Neither you nor I ever came upon any such thing as sorrow before, I believe, did we, until this summer? This gulf must have been cut across our lives for some purpose. It changes the current. Where does it lead? It changes the course, but life flows on still—and where? I want to think where? I like to think and ponder, Calla, and prove that I can think clearly. I am rational enough as yet," she said, with a tone and smile that would have been bitter and scornful if Isabel's subdued softness of manner were compatible with scorn.

"Ah, Isabel darling, it is not good for you to brood over things. Try not to think and brood over what we know," entreated Calla coaxingly. She was but a child after all, and she would occasion-

ally try to remonstrate with the inevitable, after the child-like fashion of some well-meaning people.

"The sins of the fathers are visited on the children," continued Isabel, as if in a reverie. "And yet the children are sinless. And does God care, I wonder? Nobody seems to care for our suffering except ourselves. As flies are unto us, so are we to the gods—they kill us for their sport."

"If we were looking down on a fly caught in the meshes of a cobweb from which he would be free in a minute, and seeing him struggle, yet knowing he was about to break free, I don't think we should pity his suffering much; we, looking on, should see how brief and temporary a thing it was," said Calla.

"But to poor Mr. Fly it seems about half a lifetime," said Isabel smiling. "Don't think I am profane or rebellious, Calla. It doesn't shake one's faith in a future life a whit to feel how little everything matters here—how the big machine rolls on and crushes the insect on its wheels. It would be absurd for the insect to rebel—the insect, moreover, who hopes to break out of his crushed chrysalis one day! But still one looks on the rolling wheel with a sort of sad wonder. I look, and I see I've got to live alone! I may read of love; I may see love around me. But love is to be forbidden to me. So one looks on and watches the progress of things, and the prospect is not cheering."

Calla was very sorry for her friend. Indeed, she was almost as sorry for Isabel as for herself. She alone was in Isabel's full and free confidence; she alone followed the workings of Isabel's mind, and watched with some anxiety the fanciful gloom and morbid tendency of Isabel's ideas.

"We have to do more than only looking on, Bell," she said. "We have to strengthen ourselves for what we know we have to endure, and seeing there is a certain path fated for us to tread, to tread it as well and as bravely—yes, and as happily too—as possible," continued Calla, unhappy and feeling desolate herself, but trying to kill two birds with one stone, and cheer and strengthen herself and her friend together.

"You talk of happiness who have had the best of happiness, Calla," responded Isabel quietly, "to me who have never known it—and must never let myself know it."

"I've lost it, haven't I?" said Calla, more briefly and brusquely than usual. "Well, every one thinks their own burden the heaviest—that's natural. You don't think I'm unhappy. If you knew——"

She stopped; she looked away from Isabel, and tried to frown back her tears, and bit her lip to still its quivering. Isabel silently put her arm round Calla's neck, and turned the agitated face round, and looked at it thoughtfully, and then smiled a sad shadow of a smile, her own eyes quite calm and tearless.

"Look here, Bell, darling," said Calla, no longer calm but trying desperately to be brave and philosophical, and speaking half-entreatingly, "we are young—we are strong. We must not let each other mope!"

But the exhortation ended in a sob, and an outburst of tears. Mrs. Darrell, entering the room, looked from Calla to Isabel with quick anxiety, and seeing the latter quiet and unmoved, transferred her attention back to Calla.

"Do not fret, dear child," she said, taking her hand affectionately. "You do not wish to hurt me, Calla darling, I know, but it pains me deeply to see you grieve."

"Then I will not, dear," said Calla, looking up bravely through her tears, and wiping them resolutely away.

"You are a dear good child," responded Mrs. Darrell fondly, but yet as if she had been speaking to a child indeed. Then she turned to Isabel with a look of such longing love and anxiety as seemed to seek to fathom the very depths of her daughter's soul, and caressed her hair and drew her to her side with that unutterable tenderness which made her look the ideal Madonna of our dreams. In this love all that was loveliest in her nature seemed to be outpoured. In such love there is always a touch of divinity. However rocky, however barren, even however polluted, the soil from which it springs, the flower itself is heaven-born, and springing from a seed divine, unfolds into a beauty about which the very fragrance of heaven clings still.

Mrs. Darrell's love for her daughter was wedded to sorrow beyond all divorce. She sighed as she looked into Isabel's fair, dreamy face.

"How like you are to what I was at your age!" she said, and her eyes clouded with memory, and looked the prayer her lips dared not utter. "God shield you from my troubles, for I am powerless to mould your fate!"

If there be comfort in mutual sorrow, if the burden be lightened by others bearing it too, then it must have been a considerable alleviation to Calla's troubles to know that she did not sorrow alone, nay, more, that others suffered more than she. Over Isabel's naturally fanciful and melancholy spirit the cloud always brooded now, and into the depths of Mrs. Darrell's heart none could penetrate. They were only conscious that there lay a sorrow too deep for their young hearts to fathom, far beyond all comfort, beyond all hope. She herself seldom dared to think of the past. Only when she was alone sometimes, in spite of her own will, her thoughts would burst over the banks she built high to restrain them and overflow into the old channels, and bear her away in a resistless torrent back into that past which she would have annihilated and effaced.

But from that land we cannot exile ourselves for ever. We may leave it behind across a gulf of years; the wide waters of a whole

life-time may roll between it and us, yet in dreams we shall walk those ways again.

Gertrude Darrell lived through a cycle of past seasons in one flood of memory; the voices of the dead seemed to reproach her; the ghosts of buried hopes and murdered peace rose against her as their slayer, and when most haunted by them, she turned and said, in self-pity rather than in self-reproach,

"How bitterly I have been punished! Oh, God, how bitterly! —a past all pain, a future without hope; no ray of hope, but all the horizon piled with clouds of fear!"

BOOK V

"APRIL SUNSHINE AND MAY MOONLIGHT.

" Brave as Nevada's grizzlies are,
 Or Texan tigress in her lair !
 Yet gentle as a panther is
 Mouthing her young in the first fierce kiss--
 And true of soul as the North-Pole star.
 The famous filibuster chief--
 By his white tent 'mid tall brown trees
 That top the fierce Cordilleras--
 With brown arm arched above his brow,
 Stood still. He stands a picture now--
 Long gazing down the sunset seas !"
Songs of the Sierras.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT SHALL ASSUAGE THE UNFORGOTTEN PAIN ?

A YEAR has passed since Felix Grey spoke "his last wish and his last word" to Calla, and bade her a long good-bye that autumn day at La Basse-Rive, and went his way to London.

Just a year has gone by, and it is autumn again at La Basse-Rive. Mr. and Mrs. Darrell and Isabel are there, of course, just as usual, as they have been for years, and probably will be for years, and Calla is there ; but Felix is not there, and, since they parted a year ago, Felix and Calla have not met.

Felix was in London during most of the previous winter, and is now roving from town to town in Germany on business bent, as " Our Special Correspondent."

Now as to Calla Yorke, whom this autumn, like last autumn, finds domiciled at the Château de la Basse-Rive, the natural inference which arises therefrom, that she has been there all the time, is not correct. She stayed on nearly all the winter there, and with coming spring crossed the Channel and went up to her aunt in Scotland. For this independent little Bohemian had no fear of travelling alone. Her aunt Alice was now nearly restored to health, and both the aunts had warmly invited their pet niece to

come and stay with them, and spend with them the time until her father should return. For with the spring Tom Yorke was expected back. But the spring came, and Tom Yorke did not. Had he ever done a thing he was expected to do? He wrote occasionally, but he did not come.

And the summer saw Calla back again at the Château. She stayed a little while with London friends on the way. Her path and Felix's path had crossed without meeting. He had stayed a few weeks at the Château, while she was in Scotland. While she was in London he was on his way to Vienna.

This year, from autumn to autumn, seemed to Calla a year missed out of her life, out of the life of life, that is, a year in which she had not really lived, but only existed. One sad memory and longing had lain changelessly vivid deep in her heart; nothing that had happened this year, sad or glad, had struck as deep as that memory, either to dim or deepen it. Life had gone on around, above, on the surface, but nothing seemed to pierce to the inner life where that one longing memory reigned. Time had glided away smoothly enough, but left no days whose joy would tempt or whose anguish would force, her to live them again in memory. There had been no real joy, no new sorrow. In the retrospect of her life this would be an almost forgotten year, that would lift up no memorial shaft above the level track of life. Still it was a year that had its purpose and effect.

Calla had learnt to live as much for others as for herself; always sympathetic, her sympathies had broadened and deepened. Aspiring always "upward and onward" ever her motto, she learnt to curb the impatient spirit that longed to see some outward and visible mark of process. Lost and parted from Felix, now his influence was over her more strongly, swayed her more potently than ever. There must be a post for her to fill, as he had said. She interpreted him rightly, and knew that it was not a visible and distinct post standing vacant and calling her to occupy it, but that some day she should look round and find her life was good for herself and for others, was a central thing round which some system, however small, revolved, and then she should know her post was found and filled. She knew that what she had to do was to make the best of her own nature, confident that work would be found for the qualities that were developing, by-and-by, when they should be perfected, and that in this world whatever *seems*, there is no waste.

During this year, too, she had written a great deal; she had not hidden under a bushel, but rather tended and poured oil on, the light of what talent she had, which, in itself no slight one, had been fostered and developed into fuller life by constant association with literary people. Disappointed in the dream of her heart, she

drew on the resources of her imagination, and found there a solace and a pleasure, and a field for the expenditure of the feeling that, foiled in one quarter, outpoured itself in another form. And those who were favoured by the confidential perusal of Calla Yorke's MSS. now said,

"What has come to the girl? She used to write like a child for children, prettily and simply, a year ago. She writes as a woman now!"

In little everyday things, as well as in greater ones, in thought as in deed, Felix's influence was ever silently reigning over her soul—an influence subtly, but irresistibly, counteracting the gloomy and morbid influence of his gentle and soft-spoken sister, fair, dreamy Isabel, ever so sweetly serene of face, ever so dominated by brooding despondency and fatalistic fancies in her untr tranquil soul.

Notwithstanding the strengthening and uplifting influence which Felix, lost or won, absent or present, held always over Calla; notwithstanding that gradual and silent development of her nature, the slow transition towards a womanhood grander and nobler than her bright and gracious girlhood, still Calla was not happy and was not at peace.

The love which he had given Felix was no mere girlish romance to flame, and flicker and fade; no such light fancy as those that sway the surface of the heart into a feeble ripple, on which we can look back when the pleasing pain of the parting hour is over, and say with a sigh and a smile, and a light wave of the hand to the last vanishing glimpse of the past,

"A fair good-night to thee, love,
A fair good-night to thee;
And pleasant be thy path, love,
Though it end not with me;"

Her love for Felix had grown into her soul—had become a very part of her nature. The thought of him was never absent from her: the longing to see him, the despair of their hopeless separation, stung as sorely now as in the first days after he had left her. Her disappointment at her father's non-return, her anxiety about that dear wandering, forgetful, unbalanced prodigal of a father, was swallowed up and lost in the greater and vainer longing that never ceased to fill her heart.

They did not very often hear from Felix at La Basse-Rive, and his name was of by no means frequent occurrence in conversation.

"I wonder if they think I am forgetting him?" said Calla to herself, sitting listlessly on the broad sill of the window of her room, alone, looking out upon the autumn sky. "They so seldom talk of him. I don't wish to forget him—to forget he once was mine—oh, never, never!—but I wish I could learn to look back on those days without pain." She sighed, and the autumn-trees

sighed as the wind brushed roughly past them, and a few drops of drifting rain pattered tearfully against the window. Russet leaves were lying in damp clusters about the garden paths; their fellows on the trees were brown and drooping, and dripping in a thin misty shower of rain, that had been threatening all day, and come down like a veil before the approaching sunset. The sky was grey, and colourless, and miserable, with no rift of lovely blue between the clouds, none of the glory that sometimes bursts in a thin edge of brilliance through the gloom to tell a tale of hope.

Calla looked up into the dreary sky full of an unutterable dreariness and longing.

"Oh, if he would only write to me, only a few lines of his handwriting, what would I not give for them! Or to see him—to see him again! If even it were not to speak, not to touch his hand, but only to see him—just to see him pass!"

The girl's heart was thirsting for some news of Felix, some sign, or token, or word from him, as a man lost in the hot sands of the desert craves for water. There was a dry burning fever in her heart; a word of his would cool and calm it. "Only one word!" she murmured yearningly, and the dark sad eyes dimmed with tears of pure longing.

This thirst to see, or hear of, or hear from him, would not be quenched. She might be distracted from it, and diverted for a time—might, in moods of aspiration and thoughtfulness, rise above it, and feel, as *he* would have said, that it was given her to bear and brave, but nothing cured nor quenched it, the craving was always there. And the sadder shadows in Calla's eyes, the sadder curve of her mouth, added a soul, an interest, an attraction to her beauty.

There was a stir in the house, as of some visitor entering by the hall door. Calla did not take much interest in any visitor likely to call there—she did not feel inclined for society, and the small-talk of the little English colony, who were the principal visitors where visitors at all were rare. So she did not rise, or prepare to go down, but sat still looking out at the dripping leaves with two tears rolling quietly, unchecked and unheeded, down her cheeks, and her lips curved in the stern line of pain, thinking only of Felix, longing only for *him*.

"It is not he—it is not he!" she thought, "and there is no one else in all the world I care to see but you, Felix! Felix!"

Isabel came in, opening the door more quickly, and with a livelier and more animated air than usual.

"Who do you think is downstairs, Calla?"

"Who?" asked Calla, looking up surprised, wondering who there *could* be who was of any great interest. "Anybody from my father?" was her second idea.

"No, oh! no," said Isabel, quite cool and leisurely again. She

looked at the traces of tears on Calla's cheeks, and smoothed back Calla's hair from her forehead in an affectionate, maternal sort of way, and added, "Make yourself tidy and come down to see him. It's Julius Lusada, Felix's pet friend."

"Julius Lusada!" exclaimed Calla, starting up.

The blood rushes in a beautiful glow to her pale cheek; her sad lips parted excitedly; her eyes flashed up in sudden light from beneath their dark drooping lashes. It was *his friend*, his dearest friend, of whom he had talked to her so often. Felix's friend was next best thing to Felix himself.

It seemed as if an answer to her longing cry for him had come, as if a chain of which he held the other end had been put into her hand.

She had been yearning for news, for a sign, a token, a link between him and her, and lo! as if in instant answer to her longing his friend was here—a link between her and her absent and lost lover at once!

Julius Lusada! He had been as a dream to her—a dream that since she had parted from Felix she had never thought to realize. Now she should see him with her waking eyes. She could scarcely believe it. She hurriedly arranged her hair, and added a touch or two to her dress, and went downstairs with Isabel, in a suddenly altered mood of eager excitement and anticipation.

In the *salon* stood Mr. and Mrs. Darrell and the visitor, all talking as the two girls entered.

"This is Miss Yorke," said Mrs. Darrell, indicating Calla in a smiling, matter-of-course, casual sort of introduction.

"I need no introduction to Miss Yorke," said a deep, low, pleasant voice, in a decidedly American accent, that struck strangely, but not jarringly, on Calla's ear, and a large strong hand clasped Calla's cold fingers in a cordial pressure.

She looked up full in Julius Lusada's face, with a startlingly eager longing to see what this hero-friend of Felix's was like. He was tall and broad of shoulder and deep of chest as a Hercules, he was handsome as a picture, with a splendid perfection of animal beauty. It was just possible that this figure and face might grow a shade heavy and coarse some day, but they were simply splendid now. He was fair, curly-haired, bearded, with large light eyes, deep set under broad brows. There was a power and a character in his face that might possibly under other circumstances assume a stern and lowering aspect. But his habitual expression was rather grave and proud than gloomy, and was always softened and brightened when he looked on a woman's face.

It was beginning to get dusk, and Calla only gathered a general impression of his appearance in her first quick upward glance, for her eyes sank before his, which were fixed on her at once the mo-

ment she entered the room, in unmistakable admiration and deep interest.

She was pale as ashes with the sudden agitation of this meeting; her heart was beating heavily; but that he could not see; her pallor he had no reason, at that first moment of meeting, to suppose was unusual to her; but he could not fail to notice the quivering of the sensitive lips as they smiled tremulously in answer to his look.

Their meeting and greeting was but a brief one by the clock; he only spoke those half-dozen words; she only looked up at him and smiled; but in one moment each face was photographed on the other's mind.

"And this is Felix's friend!" was her thought.

"And this is Felix's lost love!" was his.

Then he let go of the hand he had pressed in so warm a greeting, and all the group melted into general conversation, and there was bowing and handing of chairs, and all sat down.

It appeared that Julius Lusada had only lately come to Europe, had been with Felix in Germany and on the Rhine, and was now making a tour through France.

"I am going on to Paris right away," he observed, at which announcement Mr. Darrell glanced at him with a somewhat puzzled inquiring look, as though he half expected the visitor to make an immediate exit through the long window, and cut straight across the country, as the crow flies, for Paris.

They talked of Paris and London and Berlin; and Calla sat quite silent, her hands folded in her lap, looking at Julius Lusada.

It was growing twilight. It was also dinner-time; but it entirely depended upon the will and pleasure of Marie-Rose whether dinner would make its appearance within half-an-hour, or an hour, or two hours, of the appointed time. Anyhow, whenever it received that autocratic authority's permission to gladden the eyes of those who awaited it, Mr. Lusada was to stay and partake of it. It was to be hoped he had not brought a very keen-edged appetite with him; for the advent of a visitor was more likely to retard than to hasten the serving of the repast.

They sat in the dusk, talking the usual talk of such occasions. How did he like France?—how did he like England?—how did he like Europe altogether?—and had he come straight from New York?—and had he a good voyage?

Then Claudine brought in lights, and Julius Lusada turned his attention to the two girls, apparently with the purpose of taking a lamplight view, and forming an exact and critical opinion of the merits of fair-haired Isabel and dark-haired Calla.

Presently they talked of Felix again, and speaking of his friend, Lusada caught Calla's eyes fixed upon him, eyes so beautiful in their dark fire and sombre light, fixed so intensely, betraying in-

voluntarily such passionate interest and craving to hear all he could say of Felix—that he stopped speaking, seemed utterly to forget what he was saying, and gazed full-eyed at her eloquent face. And she—all possibilities of shyness and maidenly reserve lost in her eager interest to hear all he could say of Felix, looked still at him, waiting for him to continue, and for the moment both were silent, she breathless in her attention, he wrapt in uncontrollable admiration he took little pains to conceal.

The conversation that evening was to a certain extent general; but it could not be denied that Mr. Lusada had a great deal of the talk to himself. The family were interested in Felix's friend, and were one and all mentally occupied forming their opinions of him. And these opinions were one and all favourable.

There was an undefinable influence about Julius Lusada that was exceedingly difficult to withstand, and that rendered the task of pleasing always an easy one to him. Perhaps it was the atmosphere of exuberant strength and overflowing life about him, which seemed as if so inexhaustible that it brimmed over and inspired those who were closely in his company with fresh life too. Perhaps it was a magnetic influence equally difficult to describe or to resist.

There was undeniably a germ of something that might possibly have developed into what his enemies would have called "swagger," in his air and gesture and general *pose*. But it was only a possibility, a faint and scarcely perceptible suggestion of what might be developed under unfavourable circumstances from a manner that, as it was, the out-of-the-world inhabitants of La Basse-Rive found quite irresistible. He was thoroughly natural; there was not a suspicion of affectation attaching to him. His pronunciation of some words was peculiar, certainly; an occasional tone or expression savoured more of the frontier or the mining-camp than the drawing-room; and now and then his grammar seemed a trifle doubtful to the Darrells' delicate ears. But whether he was vain or modest, self-asserting or retiring, and whether he did or did not occasionally use an adjective where an adverb, by fastidious English taste, would have been deemed more suitable, he was certainly something new to them all.

To Mr. and Mrs. Darrell, in their secluded life, to Isabel, accustomed only to the tame and conventional agreeability of one or two male members of the scattered English colony, to even Calla, with her wider experience—for small though her world was, it was a bigger world than theirs—this stranger, bred in the Border-lands that hang on the outside fringe of civilization, was strange indeed.

This extreme deference of voice and accent, combined with such open admiration of look, this chivalrous gentleness and softness of

manner contrasting with the involuntary self-assertion of conscious strength, was something new and strange to them all; and novelty is almost invariably charming.

When he took his departure that evening, it was with a promise to dine with them again before he quitted the neighbourhood and went on to Paris. His visit had been quite an event in their quiet life, and he left them, even as the gate clanged behind him, discussing with more interest than they usually manifested in anything but the pony, the orchard, the "Quarterly," and the neighbourhood, his appearance, manners and conversation.

"That was a very curious and interesting account he gave us of the customs of betrothal among the Peruvian Indians," said Mr. Darrell.

"How curious, is it not, that a man who has led so rough and wild and roving a life should speak with such extreme softness and courtesy?" observed his wife.

"I wonder if that gentleness is merely superficial?" speculated Isabel.

"It is singular that his American accent does not jar upon one's ears at all. As a rule I detest the Yankee twang," said Mrs. Darrell.

"But his accent is *not* what we call the Yankee twang—not at all," said Calla, anxious to place Felix's friend in the best light possible. "And good-class Americans do *not* have it, don't you know? Papa told me all about the different accents. I think *his* is what papa calls 'the Western——'" She interrupted herself suddenly, remembering that her father's expression had been "the Western drawl." This did not sound attractive, so she substituted "the Western intonation."

Isabel saw there was some alteration from the original phrase, and observed demurely,

"That is a very pretty way of putting it."

"What colour are his eyes?" wondered Calla, with interest.

This appeared uncertain, as three answers came promptly—

"Dark blue."

"Light grey."

"Violet."

"He has a remarkably good profile," observed Mrs. Darrell.

"A very curious essay might be written on the probability of the Chinese being the earliest discoverers of America, and the similarity of certain features between the Chinese and the Indians of the North-West," remarked Mr. Darrell, to whom the idea then was a new one, and who appeared inclined to adopt some of Mr. Lusada's theories without much inquiry, and take all his anecdotes without the slightest grain of salt.

Whatever may have been Julius Lusada's shortcomings, it was

evident that he had produced a highly favourable impression on each and all of the party.

Perhaps the secret of it all was that he had for them the fascination of the unknown, except indeed that to one of them, to Mrs. Darrell—the memories whose early life were pictures of storms on solitary seas far out of sight of land, of tropic forests, and of the long reaches of desert Australian plains—he seemed possibly less like a breadth from an unknown world than an echo from a world she had long ago left behind.

CHAPTER XV

FOR THE LOVE OF DEAD DAYS AND THEIR DEAD.

ON the day when Mr. Lusada came again, the Darrells marked the occasion by inviting Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, as the best representatives of English society there attainable. Company to dinner was quite an event in the annals of La Basse-Rive, and created a pleasant excitement in the household, or rather, a pleasant stir and occupation, for the idea of "excitement" was quite incompatible with the unvarying tranquillity of Mrs. Darrell and Isabel, and the studious and abstracted placidity of the master of the house.

So the company came, and Marie-Rose happily pleased to be fairly punctual with the dinner, and pleased also for the occasion to surpass herself in the exercise of culinary talent.

Into the quiet circle of respectable dulness and gentle formality in the *salon*, Julius Lusada came like a strong breeze from the sea. Into the grey level tone of conversation he breathed fire and colour; he stood in utter contrast to them all, and yet had a native knack of harmonizing somehow with natures utterly different from his own—at least, when he was in a mood to make himself generally harmonious, as he evidently was this evening.

They talked politics, and espoused diametrically opposite sides without quarrelling, and then prudently glided on to the neutral ground of literature. Mr. Lusada was a self-educated man, it seemed, and apparently too, not a man of genius, except so far as the gift of a strong personal and magnetic influence, being a spark of God-given fire, may be termed genius. Yet there was a vividness of perception about him, a prompt responsiveness, a power of instantly seizing on a point, that enabled him to hold his own on ground he had evidently not always been accustomed to tread.

He acknowledged his lack of experience on some points with a frankness as free as his confidence on other topics where he felt himself sure. There was an almost audacious openness about his

manner that fairly fascinated Calla, whose twin idols were strength and truth.

She was romantic enough for her imagination to be pleasantly busy making Julius Lusada into an hero, but not so ultra-romantic as to be at all disenchanted by the fact that there was nothing ideal or transcendental about him. She did not demand a poetic and perfect hero—if she had, Lusada would have required a good deal of idealizing to fit him for the place. He was merely mortal man, real and of the earth, earthy; he would have fallen for ever from the pedestal of an ideal-worshipper by proving himself to own a healthy human appetite for the dinner on which Marie-Rose justly prided herself; he certainly did not talk in polished or rounded phrase, and though he offered incense at the shrine of Beauty, he did not embroider his conversation with subtly-woven gallantry; his compliments were fired point blank at their object, and were never out of the order that require some exercise of ingenuity to unravel their intricacies.

"Has Felix told you how he and I met first?" he asked of Calla during dinner, "on board the 'Cormorant'?"

"Yes," she answered, endeavouring to form a picture in her mind of this splendid fair-bearded Hercules, now attired in faultless broadcloth that fitted flawlessly to his fine figure, with a broad gold watch chain across his breast, and a great diamond glittering on his finger, as a "cook and steward!" But her mind's eye would not form the image. It was not at all so difficult to picture him as the masked leader of the Vigilante, attacking the prison to drag a doomed captive thence to violent death, although his smile now was so sweet, and his accents so soft and courteous.

"Ah, they were fine times, looking back to them now, were those days on the 'Cormorant,'" he said smiling, as he looked at her, as if he were reading at least a part of her thought. "But they were pretty rough times to live through. I owe one of my best friends to that voyage, though. Felix was down with sea-sickness half the time, I remember. I used to give him cocktail in his berth every morning, to pick him up. I spoilt that young man, I tell you. Well, it's pleasant to look back to. Like what we call the 'Good old times,' better to look back to than to live in. Should you like to live in the good old times of our grandfathers, Miss Calla?" After the first moment of introduction he had never called her Miss Yorke. "Before gas and telegraphs and railways and express mails?"

"I do not think I care much for civilization. I would as soon live in a tent as in a house," she observed.

"Ah, well said," responded Lusada. "I am an uncivilized man, Miss Calla—a pure savage at heart still. But if we are to have civilization at all, if the world is bound to move onwards, and if

towards the thing we call civilization be an onward move, why then in Heaven's name let us move fast and far! let us have all the advantages of civilization to the uttermost farthing—give us gas and the cable round the world and mail trains seventy miles an hour."

Presently, getting confidential, Julius Lusada plunged into a vivid description of what he called at first his "favourite scheme," but afterwards defined more truly as his "pet castle in the air," to Calla; and then, becoming more expansive, extended the confidence to the whole party.

This castle was a Model Republic, with a Tribunal of Three, of which he and Felix Grey were to be two, and the third was yet undiscovered, but no doubt a kindred spirit would be easily found. The tent of the Model Republic might be pitched down the South Pacific coast, or might be on an island. It was to start on a small scale, begin but as a little seed, but grow into a giant tree.

"When Felix and I first formed the plan, we went so far as to gather together a few stout, strong hearts to lay the first stones. But one of our lieutenants shirked, and another died, and somehow the thing hung fire, and I lost patience, and was off to join an expedition down New Mexico, to seek for buried treasure, which we never found. But I've never lost sight of my scheme. I don't see yet why Felix and I shouldn't carry it out some day, when we are tired of this old world. Only now I've altered my plan of campaign, as far as the first battle. Now my idea is to buy the land—land's cheap bought in great stretches. The first step now is to gather together a nucleus of strong, stout fellows—get brain and heart and muscle all well represented. The next is to get the land, and I've sobered down from my hot boyish aspirations enough to see the best plan is to buy the land."

"But how could you ever have got it without buying it?"

"As land has been won and lost from the beginning of the world, lady. The race is to the swift, and the battle to the strong. There are lands where might is right, and there we should have struck our flagstaff. Steel, not gold, would have been our currency just then. But those days are past."

Of course, everybody except the girls looked somewhat taken aback, and tried politely to pretend not to be shocked. Equally, of course, the two girls' four bright eyes lit up with delight. They would have thought Julius Lusada irresistible, if he had only proclaimed himself a Robin Hood or a Corsair, or a Giaour. Depend upon it, Desdemona would have thought rather the more than the less of Othello if he had led a filibustering expedition on his own account, instead of doing the state service at Cyprus.

"Felix would have been our chief judge," continued Lusada. "I should have been military governor. The third would have been

manager of finance and commerce. We three should have formed a tribunal before whom all cases should be brought, and from whose decision there should be no appeal."

"Like the Council of Three in Venice," said Mrs. Darrell.

"It seems to me that that is rather a kind of shamrock monarchy, a three-in-one despotism, than a Model Republic," suggested Calla.

Lusada endeavoured to prove that this triple monarchism would be productive of the purest liberty, equality, and fraternity. He argued his case, and proved it very satisfactorily to himself, but convinced no one else. He also manifested by clear argument and assertion that this his favourite Model Republic, beginning but as a mustard seed, would develop and increase at a rate not far short of the beanstalk Jack planted, till in time perhaps whole continents might be sheltered under its spreading branches; though this, he was good enough to own, was merely a possibility. Still none could measure or limit the range of the possibilities that lie enfolded in the smallest germ. This very seed had over and over again been wasted on the wrong ground and perished barren; but perhaps its day of development would come. He, at any rate, appeared satisfied in his faith, if he made no converts.

All that evening, through all discussions and under all circumstances, Julius Lusada kept a constant attention fixed on Calla—sometimes a silent, and never a too openly marked attention, but always an observation unceasingly combining admiration, and curiosity, and interest, that seemed to imply far more than it expressed. But then Lusada's way in dealing with the fairer and softer half of creation was a way which conveyed the idea that he only dared to express half what he meant.

His attention to Calla thus did not seem a singular or a special thing; he spoke to Isabel with equal deference and looked with equal admiration into Isabel's soft sapphire eyes—only not so often nor so long as he gazed at Calla. He never ignored Calla's presence or seemed to forget that she was near him, no matter how exclusively masculine in tone and interest was the discussion going on. She would turn and catch his large, deep-set eyes flashing a side glance upon her in the course of every wave of conversation that rose and fell.

When there was a little stir in the *salon*, caused by Mrs. Reynolds opining that it must be nearly time to go, Lusada was close to Calla's side. He drew nearer to her, and as she looked up at him their eyes met full.

"I had so wished to see you," he said in lowered voice. "Felix has told me, of course. It was to see you far more than aught else that I came here. Now that I have seen you, I comprehend."

Calla felt quite at home with Julius Lusada. Her own relations—the few she had—seemed more strangers to her than this man

whom she saw now for the second time. She felt no shade of shyness or embarrassment at his allusion.

She repeated his last word.

"Comprehend our parting?" she said. "You need not have seen me to comprehend that Felix would do his duty at any cost."

"No, not that. I know it well. But I did need to see you to comprehend the seal that you have set upon his life. See! Miss Calla. Felix Grey doesn't need a good angel so much as some of us rough fellows do; for he's pure gold right through. But he has his good angel with him to his life's end in his memory of you."

Calla's eyes lit with a passionate light of rapturous memory; a bright and sudden smile flashed upon her beautiful lips; a glory of exaltation and love and longing illumined and perfected her face. Lusada was gazing full into the passionate eyes, full on the lovely face. Not another word was spoken; they looked at each other so in silence for a moment, as if no others were by, as if they stood alone in the room, alone in the world, with one mutual memory and knowledge to link their two souls together—only for just one moment, and then he turned—reluctantly and with an effort, as it seemed—to join the rest of the group.

But when the eyes of man and woman have once thus met, although they part that hour, they remember through years; and in the crowd of greater, darker, brighter memories, that one little memory of a moment will not be lost.

When Felix heard that his friend Lusada had visited the Château de la Basse-Rive and produced so favourable an impression there, it would seem that he was exceedingly gratified, to judge by the unusually long and expansive letter he wrote to his family on the subject.

"I am glad you all like Lusada," he wrote. "You will not be surprised when you hear me talk of 'my best friend' again. I don't think you can imaginewhat this meeting with him has been to me, and how when he and I are together we live our old life again. You have only seen one phase of him. His truest element always seems to me to be that life of tropical adventure which he and I have left behind, but which I always fancy will reclaim him to itself some time. You should have seen him in those days, attired like a brigand (not stage, but genuine), riding like a cavalry raider, through clouds of blinding dust and scorching sun rays, and deadly night dews that poured fever and ague around upon us—always our leader and our chief—the bolder when we failed or wavered—exulting in absolute and limitless freedom—revelling in barbaric splendour—commanding a horde of wild retainers of whom there was not one who did not look capable of relieving a traveller of his purse and his life at the earliest convenient opportunity. But Lusada held them all in perfect subjection—treated them with a

mingling of despotic authority and princely liberality. Money made itself by magic and melted away as if by magic too in those days. The life had its drawbacks—some of us were generally down with ague fever—and I suppose we were a lawless set! We led the life of a thousand years ago and felt as if we had left the world for ever behind. And Lusada was then an uncrowned king! admired, dreaded, hated, beloved! poet, dreamer, adventurer, despot! I sometimes wonder how he can walk in the world with other men in a stove-pipe hat and gloves."

CHAPTER XVI.

"UN ASTRE DANS MON CŒUR S'EST-IL AUSSI LEVE?"

JULIUS LUSADA had come and gone, and life at the Château de la Basse-Rive flowed on its even and monotonous way again.

He had flashed across that calm, grey twilight life, strange and sudden as a meteor that gleams and glides in "a silent furrow" through the sky and disappears. But he had not disappeared to be forgotten. Often and often the family at the Château, as they drew round the great wood fire on damp autumn or winter evenings, talked of him and wondered where his erratic path lay now, whether that life that he had loved and left behind would indeed, as Felix deemed, reclaim him once more, whether across their tranquil orbit that comet would ever dart again. But, if a disturbing influence, he had been anything but a distressing one. His visit had been not only bright itself, but left a bright track of light behind it. One at least of that household was by far the happier for her brief knowledge of him.

It seemed to Calla that she was far less utterly severed from Felix now that she had seen and known this friend of his, of whom, during all the course of their love, he had so often and so warmly spoken to her, and of whose guidance of his early wanderings he retained even now, it was evident by the unusual outburst of his letter, memories as vivid and as enthralling as ever. It seemed a chain between her and her lover, parted though they were; it seemed an echo from the happy year ago past, and the thought of possibly seeing Julius Lusada again was as a link between the past and future that gave to the formless future some interest and shape, and even cast on it from the past some reflected light.

Often and often she repeated to herself now the words she kept in her heart, the last words, with the exception of a brief "Good-night—good-bye" that Lusada had spoken to her, "Felix has his good angel with him to his life's end in his memory of you."

Often as ever she dreamt and thought of Felix, even more avidly, even more longingly than ever, yet somehow with less of heart aching and of pain.

What the ordinary changes and incidents, the ebbing and flowing of every-day life could never have done, Lusada's coming had accomplished—it had struck down at once to the memory that lay so deep, and stirred it from its dark, still, sombre silence with a keenness that was part pleasure and part pain.

Now Calla began once more that darling occupation of the young, the erecting of castles in the air. They were gloomy castles, Rembrandt pictures now—castles wherein death, not love, was the presiding genius, and where the altar was not hung with white for the bridal, but draped in black for the funeral service—castles wherein Felix lay dying, and sent his true friend to fetch his true love to him for a last farewell, and for a change, under a reversal of similar distressing circumstances, it was Calla herself who was bidding farewell to life and love, and intrusting her last message for Felix to Julius Lusada's care.

They were not very bright, airy castles, certainly, but the building of them in her solitary hours or wakeful nights amused her, and she was far happier than in the apathy which had built no castles at all.

Whether in these castles, wherein three *dramatis personæ* invariably occupied the scene, Julius Lusada would have borne so prominent a part if he, being equally Felix's friend, had been in himself unattractive and common-place, who shall say? Calla did not know, never asked herself, and would have been utterly puzzled and unable to answer if the question had been put by her own reason to her own heart.

She did not leave the Château de la Basse-Rive that winter, but Mrs. King came over to spend Christmas and a week or two of the new year there.

Mrs. King did not quite understand about the abrupt cessation of the engagement or understanding between Felix and Calla. "Do not let us talk about it, auntie dear. Nobody was to blame, but we saw that it was best," was all that Calla had ever said to her during the time they were together in Scotland. Mrs. King was puzzled, because she had seen very plainly there was a strong attachment between those two young people, and did not think they were either of them of natures fickle, jealous, or worldly enough to account for any quarrel sufficiently serious to lead to their parting.

She had thought that possibly at La Basse-Rive she might find Mrs. Darrell more communicative than Calla had been, and hear more of the "full, true, and particular history." But now that she was there she found the subject utterly and calmly ignored—saw that she was rather further off than ever, and so resigned herself to

the inevitable, and let Calla keep her own secrets, without teasing the girl by ever a hint or an innuendo, like a treasure of an aunt as she was.

They had a regular English Christmas at the château that year, gathered their few friends and neighbours round them in honour of their guest, Mrs. King, procured a bush of mistletoe to hang up in the *salon*, and adorned the rooms with evergreens. Marie-Rose also distinguished herself by a very large dish of very diminutive tartlets called mince-pies, and a plum pudding, which would have been a very good pudding indeed had it not come more under the category of a liquid than a solid.

Mr. Joseph Smith, son and heir of the Smiths, and about the only youthful bachelor of the English circle there, cast furtive glances at the mistletoe and blushed, and after dinner screwed up his courage to make sundry complimentary and jocular allusions to the mystic shrub; but his courage went no further. It would have taken the audacity of a Julius Lusada to venture upon claiming the season's privilege from the tranquil reserve of Isabel or the franker self-possession of Calla, especially in the stately, old-world air, the curious mixture of freedom and formality of the chateau.

Altogether, Christmas at La Basse-Rive made a very fair fight to merit its time-honoured adjective. And the mild excitement pleased Isabel, while as for Calla, she rose into high spirits as she recalled a five years ago London Christmas in dingy Clarence Street, the giggling glee of the small marchioness, the grandeur of the landlady in her best black silk gown, the puddings that went up to the female lodgers who were at home, and slices of which were sent "with compliments" by each to the other, and the outbursts of melody after midnight from the returning male lodgers who had been dining out. She laughed as she poured out all these childish, trivial, happy memories to Isabel, and then sighed and said, "I was such a child then, and, oh, it was such a happy time!"

The new year opened, and soon was new no more. Twelfth Day came and the withering holly was taken down, and soon after that Mrs. King declared she could prolong her visit no further and must return to London. She wished to take Calla back with her, but Mrs. Darrell wished Calla to stay with them, and Mrs. Darrell won the day. It was true that Mr. Yorke was expected back; but then, as Mrs. Darrell represented, he had been expected now for nearly a year, and his return was far too uncertain for it to be necessary that Calla should be in London to receive him. Besides, if the chronic expectation of his return should be suddenly realized, his daughter could instantly be telegraphed for. They would miss her so much, Mrs. Darrell said, and Isabel would be so sadly lonely without her.

Calla herself would have liked well enough to return with

"auntie" to London, but she liked staying at the château equally well, and she knew that there she was more needed. There was a place that only she just now could fill; she had become almost a necessary part of daily life at La Basse-Rive, and she knew she would be missed, and by Isabel at least seriously missed. So it was settled that her return to London should be deferred to the spring.

Felix was at this time in Rome. It is possible that had he been in London, Calla's resolution to remain at La Basse-Rive might have been hard to hold.

Spring entered upon her reign, by the calendar, on the 21st of March; but spring had taken possession of the land before then, called forth the tiny buds upon the bough, the peeping primroses from the hedgerows, and the "wood notes wild" from the thrush's throat. Then April came, and waxed and waned, and with waning April the trees burst into sudden glory of green; the pink and snowy blossoms of the apple-trees showered down on the long grass in the orchard; the nightingale tuned his early melody in the spring twilight; and then, when all was loveliest, freshest, and fairest at La Basse-Rive, life seemed to Calla to brighten with the brightening season. Her elastic spirits rose responsive to the smile of the sunshine that lavished itself on the land it always seems to love so well, that "Pleasant Land of France."

If

"In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast,
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest,
In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove,
In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

so surely a young girl's heart unfolds unconsciously to fresh possibilities of hope. The spring sun calls upon it, and plays in dancing beams about it, and sends little coaxing rays darting in between the folded petals; and though the flower has been closed and drooping all the night, it opens now to greet the morning light of the year.

Even Isabel brightened a little at this season: but she, at her brightest, shone like a pale, distant, dreamy star beside Calla's bloom of living sunshine. Yet some would have dreamed the star, with all its pale mournfulness, the fairer light of the two.

On these mild spring evenings the two girls resumed their old habit of twilight or starlight rambles. There was a wild and wandering element in Isabel that could not be kept within bounds. It was often a puzzle to Calla whether her friend--though she seemed to find the life at La Basse-Rive wearisome in its monotony--could ever have endured the restraints of life in the world of a great city.

From a child Isabel had roved freely about at her own will, never crossed or contradicted by her mother, sweetly and serenely ignoring her step-father's delicately-hinted anxiety as to the pru-

dence of allowing her such freedom, never defiant of, but calmly indifferent to, the sentiments of the neighbourhood—whose comments, indeed, whenever Miss Grey's unconventional proceedings came to their knowledge, were stringent to a high degree, both on the young lady's eccentricity and on her parents' laxity of discipline. Yet the Darrells were regarded by those around with a certain amount of respect, if not much affection. On the strength of their unvarying self-possession and repose of manner—which no one had ever seen ruffled—they were accredited with being "good" (not in the sense of virtuous) people, who were probably sufficiently well-connected to be able to afford to indulge in a little eccentricity.

Thus, although now Felix was no longer with them, to attend as protector and escort on these evening walks, Isabel and Calla still went wandering when and where the former pleased. A great half-bred Newfoundland dog to some extent supplied Felix's place; and with this faithful four-footed attendant at their side, they felt secure and safe.

It is a still, balmy spring evening, the birds have gone to their nests, and earth's flowers shut up, and Heaven's flowers come out in blossoms of light.

"Bon soir, Madame Maurice," Isabel says politely, standing on the threshold at the open door of a little cottage that lies near the château grounds, and bending her head in as gracious a courtesy as if saluting a duchess, she looks into the dimly-lit apartment, whose four bare walls appear to contain bedroom, sitting-room, kitchen and hall.

Madame Maurice is superintending the evening's supper, which swings in an iron gipsy-pot over a red and sulphurous-smelling fire on the brick hearth. Monsieur Maurice, in a clean blue blouse, is dancing the eldest hope of the family on his knee. The light of one dip candle barely illuminates the little room sufficiently to disclose the heads of three other olive-branches reposing on the pillow of a narrow pallet-bed in the corner; on the wall above there hangs a little image of the Virgin, in a faded blue robe, and with a tarnished tinsel halo.

Monsieur Maurice rises, puts down the child from his knee, patting its head meanwhile, and thus combining paternal affection with courtesy, says with native hospitality, "Entrez, mesdemoiselles." Madame, still stirring with a long spoon, also gives them welcome. These evening habits of the young ladies from the château have ceased to astonish the cottagers in the immediate neighbourhood.

Tartar, like most watch-dogs, is a dog of aristocratic instincts, and apparently thinks these visits too republican for him to heartily approve. He will not enter the cottage, but sits down on his haunches on the threshold, looking solemn as any judge. Calla inquires about Monsieur Maurice's rheumatism, while Isabel listens

with grave sympathy to Madame's glib account of the accident which has befallen *ce pauvre petit François*, who is sitting up on the bed staring at the visitors with his finger in his mouth, and who has only yesterday tumbled off the fence and sprained his foot.

Monsieur Maurice looks into the iron pot with interest, and bends to sniff the welcome fragrance.

"Très bon ce soir," he observes, with much satisfaction, and ladling up some of the contents into a bowl, regards the ascending steam with critical eye, and turns invitingly towards Calla. The delicacy of this hospitality she appreciates, and promptly responds to it by expressing, as she is expected to do, a desire to judge of the flavour of the mess that smokes so fragrantly, accepting a wooden spoon, and dipping up a spoonful of a kind of *olla podrida* of various vegetables, fresh and dried, with floating crusts of bread and a suspicion, without a substance of meat—as if meat had merely fulfilled the prescribed duty of garlic, and just flown through the kitchen—all stewed into a savory-enough pottage.

Isabel also goes through the form of daintily lifting a spoonful to her lips, and duly avails herself of the opportunity of complimenting "Madame" on her cookery, while Monsieur smiles his satisfaction as host. Tartar, tempted by sight and odour, condescends to enter the room now, and acknowledging Monsieur Maurice's "*Voilà un brave chien !*" by a dignified wave of his tail, lifts his nose with a suggestive sniff. Tartar is an ungrateful dog, however, who, having got all he can get, is apt to turn and growl at the hand that has fed him, if it be a stranger's hand. Isabel, aware of this characteristic, rebukes and dismisses him. Tartar retires to the threshold, too haughty to beg, and turns his back on them with an offended air.

"On danse chez Larose ce soir," Monsieur Maurice observes conversationally, and waving his ladle vaguely in the direction of Larose's *auberge*.

It further appears that the dance is a little festivity in honour of the approaching nuptials of Angélique, the pretty maid of the Mill, who is to be married to a young Parisian *ouvrier*, Louis Raquet by name. In this item of gossip Isabel takes a neighbourly interest.

"Let us walk on to Larose's, Calla," she suggests.

"Oh, Bell, isn't it too far?—and the road is so dark."

"Well, we will walk in that direction, anyhow. Come, we are ready, Tartar—lazy fellow, wake up! Bon soir, Madame Maurice."

The dog, who had been blinking and breathing deep and comfortable sighs with his nose on his paws, looks up, and thumps his tail on the ground joyfully and arises to fulfil his duty as escort. Madame Maurice, who is setting out the supper on the one table, pouring the savoury stew into a big deep dish, and putting out a tall *carafon* of cider, offers them a draught of that cool beverage, which neither cheers nor inebriates, before they go. But having

done their duty in the line of breaking bread beneath the roof, the two girls bid a smiling good-night, in the way that their cottage friends around think so *gentille*, and take their departure.

Calla always leaves Isabel to be the leading spirit; so of course they take the turning towards the Auberge Larose.

The road is certainly dark; one half of it lies in the dense black shadow of tall, spreading trees; the other half is a mass of moving, flickering shades and pale tremors of faint light, as the beams of the stars break through the slender budding branches of the high hedgerows. There had been the silver crescent of the new moon shining whitely pure in the dark blue sky a little while ago; it has sunk, slowly, lowly, and is lost to sight now behind the wooden slopes; but its beauty is not missed now that all the heavens are a gleam; no moonlight could be

"Fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

On the lonely road there is not a creature in sight, not a lamp to be seen glimmering through the shadows of the trees. With Tartar keeping close to their side—as if he deemed his duty demanded that he should not indulge in his daylight scamperings ahead or lingerings behind or wild careers over hedge and ditch—the two girls trip along.

"It's a good deal further, Bell, isn't it? Do you think we had better go on?" demurs Calla.

"Why not? It's not far. What are you afraid of?" the other responds languidly, sauntering steadily on without a moment's pause.

"Nothing," Calla replies doughtily; but being city-bred, she can never get rid of a lurking doubt as to the discretion of starlight perambulations along lonely French country roads; and she glances with a little start towards a moving shadow some distance ahead, a shadow that, as it nears, proves itself certainly human, probably masculine.

"A man," says Isabel, placidly following her glance. "But he won't eat us."

They are in the star-lit streak on one side of the road; the man coming towards them is more in the shadows. A tiny crimson spark betrays that he is enjoying the solace of a solitary stroll and smoke; the nearing shadow informs them that he belongs rather to the race of the Goliaths than the Davids. He is tall and looks Herculean in the dim half-light. As his personality becomes gradually more and more evident, it also becomes evident that he is looking at them, and, to Calla at least, unpleasantly clear that he is steering straight towards them.

They are conspicuous objects enough on that lonely road. They are both in the white dresses they put on at their toilette before

dinner. Calla has a coquettish hat and a scarlet shawl; Isabel, who in her attire for these evening rambles simply observes the rule of putting on whatever things she finds readiest to her hand, is all white, even up to the now most unnecessary shady sun-bonnet with which she has covered her blonde braids of hair. They are certainly two striking figures to encounter in such a place alone at such an hour.

The man removes his cigar from his mouth as he draws closer and closer towards them, evidently with the intent of intercepting them. Tartar looks at him suspiciously, and gives a low warning bark. Isabel, with her fair head held high, looks at the intruder, or rather looks over and past him, loftily. Calla resolutely refrains from bestowing on him so much as a glance, and determinedly ignores his approach until he stands right in their way. Tartar, thinking this altogether unwarrantable, but still honourably scrupulous as to giving the alarm before he advances to the onset, bristles all his back up from head to tail with a thundering growl.

"Good dog! brave dog!" says a half-laughing voice, "guard them well. And don't you know me?" he adds to the dog's mistresses. "I am not a midnight marauder or a bandit—not now, at least."

He has taken off the hat that had shadowed his face, and the starlight glimmers on a broad brow and tawny beard.

"*You!*" exclaims Calla, with a sort of gasp, her breath literally taken away with surprise, and relief, and sudden joy, and on the impulse of the moment stretching out both her eager hands in welcome. "Is it really *you*?"

"Mr. Lusada!" says Isabel, not quite so languidly as usual. "About the last person in the world we expected to see!"

"I can't say as much," he responds. "You are not by any means the last people I expected to see; you are the very people I was thinking of, and that's a fact."

"Naturally, so near our home," she replies, falling back into her normal placidity.

"Did you think I was prowling around on mischief bent?" he asks.

"Tartar did, if we didn't," responds Calla, patting the dog.

"And *you* did, Calla," says Isabel smiling; "you were quite of Tartar's mind."

"I am not now," replies Calla, "for Tartar is a little suspicious still. Quiet, Tartar, good boy; it is a friend, and you are to give him your paw."

Tartar sniffs suspiciously, and walks all around Julius Lusada; then, seeming reassured, he comes back to Calla with his bristling back all smoothed down, wags his tail in a dignified and patronizing

way, and then condescends to sit down on his haunches, and offer a huge, black, and somewhat muddy paw for Mr. Lusada's acceptance.

"We call him our negro footman," observes Calla gaily. "He is such a faithful guardian, and escorts us on all our rambles."

"I would not pay the dog so bad a compliment as to liken him to a nigger," says Lusada, shaking the offered paw, and patting Tartar's head more freely than strangers as a rule were wont to do.

"You see, we are not like the young lady in 'Rich and Rare,'" remarks Isabel. "We take a defender with us, and if we had any diamonds, we should probably leave them at home; and if you had addressed us in proper poetic terms, 'Ladies, do not fear to stray?' et cetera, Calla, for one, could not have fairly answered, Sir knight, I feel not the least alarm."

"No, Miss Calla looked away from me as resolutely as if I had the evil eye," he rejoins—and if he possessed that uncanny gift, it would go ill with Calla, he is regarding her so intently.

"I thought you might be about to demand our money or our life," she says laughing, "and as we have left our purses at home, I was wondering whether you would accept a gilt locket and a damaged pearl ring."

"I guess Dick Turpin himself—he's the traditional British highwayman, isn't he?—would have let you two pass without demanding toll."

"Do you think that chivalry lingers later in the gentle breast of the highwayman than in the heartless world of society?" demands Calla.

"May be I hold ideas even as heterodox as that. And now where are you bound, you and your faithful black footman?"

"We were walking towards Larose's to see the dance," replies Isabel.

"Larose's? Why, I'm putting up there to-night. May I walk there with you?" he says, with an air of absolute deference to their will and pleasure, but withal rather eagerly.

"And help Tartar in his pleasing duty, you ought to add," suggests Calla.

"And defend us against any *more* dangerous midnight marauders," observes Isabel.

"If such there be?" he adds, as, all three together, they proceed amicably along the road towards Larose's.

"I dared not make sure until I got close to you that it was really you in flesh and blood," he remarks. "You were two such fair apparitions, I half thought you would vanish into thin air as I came near."

"Isabel looks like the White Maid of Avenel, does she not?" says Calla, regarding her friend with simple admiration.

"I have not the honour of the White Maid of Avenel's acquaint-

tance," he replies. "I don't even know whether she belongs to the land of prose or poetry. I am only half civilized, you know."

"No, we don't know! We have not found that out yet," rejoins Calla. "You wear a certain veneer of civilization that we neither have scratched through, nor have the slightest intention of scratching through—as one is supposed to do to the typical Russian—and rather hard on the Russian it always seems to me!"

They very soon come in sight of Larose's; disappointingly soon, indeed, as to them all the walk seems not to have been a hundred yards.

The Auberge Larose is evidently *too* small to contain the merry-makers—they have overflowed into a large bare-walled empty shed, which—whatever might be the purpose for which it was originally built—is used as a kind of coach-house, harness-room, and general repository, and is now cleared out for the benefit of the dancers, who are capering around in the mad circle they call the *Ronde*, to the music of their own "most sweet voices." Conspicuous among the caperers are the plighted pair, a handsome black-haired young Frenchman with big melancholy eyes, and pretty little Angélique of the Mill, resplendent in smiles and blushes, an azure blue petticoat, and a bran-new set of silver ornaments.

The door stands hospitably wide open; any passer-by is welcome to witness the dancers circle round in time to their own singing; the shed is illuminated for the occasion by a lantern or two, and a liberal allowance of candles stuck in hoops.

Calla and Isabel and their two guardians, biped and quadruped, avail themselves of the invitingly open door, cross the threshold with a comfortable air of assurance of being welcome, and stand regarding the amazing antics with which some of the most energetic of the dancers tear round the ring until the circle breaks and disperses, and the visitors are recognized with many a broad smile and a few low bows of various degrees of grace from the jerk to the stately inclination. Isabel serenely made her way up to the betrothed pair and makes a pretty, polite speech. Louis Raquet bows low, and in a deep, melancholy voice, which just matches his melancholy Celtic eyes, responds by a respectful compliment.

"Isn't he like Don Quixote, with those hollow cheeks and mournful eyes?" observes Isabel calmly. "You needn't look alarmed, Calla; he can't understand a word of English. His Dulcinea is looking her best to-night, isn't she? She'll be an ugly old woman, but she's a pretty girl!"

Meanwhile, Angélique in the back-ground, conscious of being the object of comment, though not aware of the kind of compliment which Isabel's soft, low voice is uttering, blushes becomingly. Julius Lusada, perceiving what is the topic of solicitation, joins in with a free and easy air of *camaraderie*, congratulates one and com-

pliments the other of the *fiancé's*. In doubtful French, with a most undoubtful accent, and with a free and Republican independence, asserting itself in his grammar as he mixes tenses, murders adjectives, and jumps over pronouns, he yet contrives to make himself comprehended.

They cannot stay; they have merely looked in *en passant* to see the merry-making, as they explain. But they linger minute after minute, linger to exchange a few words with Jeannette Lemoine, linger to listen while somebody sings a song with a chorus, which is evidently intended to represent the gurgling of the wine out of a bottle, and is sung in a descending scale.

"Glou, glou, glou, glou, glou!"

Then they go out in the open air again, and sit down on the narrow wooden benches outside the door of the Auberge Larose, where rickety little seats and tables are dotted about under half-a-dozen sparsely scattered trees. They hear the shrill, merry clatter and the snatches of song, and the stamp of the dance through the open doorway; they see each other only dimly in the shadowy starlight under the still unfolded foliage of the budding branches overhead. Isabel looks all white and aerial like a spirit; Calla's scarlet shawl seems to have lost its colour and looks only like a patch of warmer shadow than the rest; Tartar sits resting his great head on her knee, with his black nose poked into her hand.

The old-fashioned gable of the little wayside *auberge* cuts out a sharp point of the starry sky; little yellow pin-points of light twinkle through its lattice windows; people are clattering in and out of its tiled entry.

"I'm quartered in a little pigeon-hole up yonder," observes Lusada, nodding towards the gable-end. "Such a clean, prim, primitive little room, with such snowy curtains, it makes me feel quite innocent and virtuous."

"That *must* be a novel sensation!" says Calla demurely.

"I knew you would say that," he responds promptly, looking at her fixedly under the brim of his broad-leaved hat, though in this twilight under the trees he cannot see the face he looks on—could not tell whether it be pretty or plain; he does not need to see, indeed, he knows well enough how fair she is—knew it from the first moment his eyes rested on her face, would know it always even if they were never to rest on her face again.

"We must go now, Bell, must we not?" suggests Calla.

"Not just yet," Isabel replies. "It is like a dream here, somehow. We seem so far off from those happy people dancing and singing, and yet they are so close!"

"It *is* like a dream," agrees Lusada. "I did not think an hour ago that I should be sitting here with you two under these cold spring stars."

"They are cold, but their coldness is lovelier than the sun's warmth to me. They are just as chill and just as pure and perfect and beautiful as fresh-fallen snow," observes Calla, looking up through the branches.

"Sometimes I fancy," says Isabel, in her soft, dreamy way, "that they might be the eyes of the souls we loved on earth looking down from heaven at us, so coldly and so distantly."

They are obliged to rise and move on their homeward way at last. The time has not been long in reality, but they have so utterly forgotten how it might be passing, they scarcely know whether it is early or late. Julius Lusada, of course, will not allow them to walk back on that lonely road alone, so the three retrace their steps together, Tartar, satisfied that they are in safe hands, trotting ahead, looking like a black bear with a bone in his mouth, which he has picked up by the roadside, and which he means to crunch in the first secluded corner.

"You were not going to be in this neighbourhood without coming to see us, of course?" says Isabel.

"I had intended to pay you a visit, certainly."

"I won't ask you to come in to-night," she observes quietly, "as it must be late. But you will come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, then. And I shall not forget this night," he rejoins, in that deep, soft voice, which they find very pleasant to their ears.

"Nor we our alarm at the first sight of you," observes Calla smiling. "Now, here we are at our own gates. Good-night."

"Are you sure you are all safe now?—no lurking dangers in the court-yard?" he says, holding the hand Calla has given him in farewell.

"Quite safe. There is nothing half so alarming inside the gates as what we leave outside," she replies, unable to resist this parting fling as she turns away.

"There is many a true word spoken in jest," he says solemnly, with a laughing sparkle in his eye that she knows, though she cannot see it. "But do me the justice to own that, if I *am* the Wolf, I have not shown my teeth to you little Red Riding-hoods to-night. And now good-night, Miss Isabel. I shall see you—both—to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVII.

"YOU CAME AND THE SUN CAME AFTER!"

ON the morrow, when Julius Lusada paid his promised visit to the Château de la Basse-Rive, he received a cordial welcome. Mrs.

Darrell sweetly thanked him for his care of the two girls, touching on their erratic propensities in a tone too calm to be apologetic, but gently explanatory, and evidently regarding the fact that "it was Isabel's way" as a thoroughly satisfactory explanation of all that might have seemed a trifle imprudent.

There had been a discussion between Mr. and Mrs. Darrell that morning, the result of which was an extremely pleasant surprise for Calla and Isabel, in the shape of a hospitable invitation to Mr. Lusada to stay at the château instead of at the auberge so long as he was in the neighbourhood.

"I consider it only right, Gertrude, my dear, he being such an intimate friend of Felix's," had been Mr. Darrell's dictum on the subject. "And I should not like an American to think that we, as English families, fail in hospitality."

Lusada himself did not require much pressing to accept the invitation.

"Will you really take me in?" he said. "That is good of you. I have wanted to have an opportunity of learning to know you all well. I have never forgotten those two right pleasant days I spent last autumn here."

"Nor have we, I can assure you; and the pleasure of our better acquaintance will, I am sure, be all on our side," said Mr. Darrell, bending his grey head with formal, but kindly courtesy.

"We are very primitive here, you must know," said Mrs. Darrell, in her slow, sweet way. "I hope you will not mind roughing it a little."

"Roughing it! Dear lady, you do not know here what 'roughing it' is. I have roughed it all my life, more or less. Give me a blanket in your orchard, or a shake-down in the hay-loft. I have slept a hundred times with less than that."

"You will not be quite reduced to that here," Mrs. Darrell smiled.

So Julius Lusada sent for his portmanteau, and took up his quarters under the Darrells' roof; and seldom was guest more welcome.

He fell at once into their ways of life, and seemed to delight in them as though they were the very paths he would have chosen to tread. He made himself so thoroughly at home that even Mr. Darrell felt no constraint in his presence. He went out and came in at his own will, so that they never felt as if he was a responsibility, or a guest who must be "entertained." On the very first morning of his stay at La Basse-Rive, Mrs. Darrell forgot to apologize, and did not feel as if any excuse was needed, when Mr. Lusada (probably unaware of the movable breakfast-time that rendered an early gathering together of the family unnecessary) made his appearance downstairs at an hour which for La Basse-

Rive was very early, and after being greeted by a mellifluous grunt from a clean, plump, pinky-white pig, who had strayed in at the open outer door, and was making an inspection of the hall-mat and the scraper—discovered Mrs. Darrell herself busily and noisily grinding at a coffee-mill, in a kind of *négligée*, which made her look not unlike Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth in the hall-scene after the murder.

Mr. Lusada, however, in no way discouraged, continued daily his habit of early rising, in which he was supported by Calla, who was generally up and out the first of the household. So on those fresh spring mornings, again and again they two, and sometimes Isabel as a third, met in the early dewy sunshine, and strolled around the gardens, and plucked flowers to adorn the golden curls and dark braids at the breakfast gathering. In a very few days Julius Lusada became less like a welcome guest than like one of themselves—there was not one of them who would not sorely miss his proud, grave, handsome face and stately figure from their circle; there was a magnetism about his presence that acted on them as a glamour, and veiled from them all those potentialities of self-assertion and glimmerings of the latent effect of rougher, wilder life, which, had they merely heard him describe, they might have been inclined somewhat sharply and severely to criticize. But he took them captive somehow, so that they noticed no fault in him. His exuberant strength and health and life stirred and invigorated the household like a fresh salt-sea wind.

It was strange how Mr. Darrell, studious, formal, old world, and Mrs. Darrell, proud and reserved, aristocrat as she was in look and air and thought and prejudice, liked and admitted into most familiar friendship this wandering American adventurer, whose history was utterly unknown to them, except so far as that he was their son's friend, and a few episodes, mostly of the "moving accidents by flood and field" kind, which he himself related to them when in an autobiographical mood—and concerning whose money, although to all appearance he had plenty of it, they were in the blindest ignorance as to whence or how it came into his possession.

It was a question of some interest and anxiety to Calla at first whether the political views of host and guest would clash or harmonize—whether, if they clashed very dangerously, the mutual and natural courtesy of waiving disputed subjects would be strong enough to stand against the generally irresistible temptation of mankind to talk politics, especially when there are but two together who have little other ground of common interest. On this general meeting-ground Mr. Darrell and the guest of course encountered frequently; and Calla perceived with relief that there seemed no risk of a dangerous battle.

Wide apart, by nation and by nature, as the two men were, they

could not be expected to agree; and agree in detail they never did; but there was sometimes a certain harmony in their opinions, and often when they ran on different lines it happened that the lines lay parallel instead of crossing. Besides, the very consciousness of the wide diversity in which they had been born, bred, and reared, perhaps caused them to allow to each other a freer latitude of expression than they would have done had they belonged to the same race, and tacitly and mutually they dropped the argument whenever the conflict got too close.

Julius Lusada, of course, professed Republicanism on its broadest basis, and conscientiously avowed himself a disciple of the doctrine of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. In seeming inconsistency with these professions, there always peeped out from among his words the evidence of his inherent and uncontrollable tendency to worship the personal influence of the chief, let that chief be king, high priest, or warrior!—his unconscious inclination to recognize in that influence a right and a claim—his faith in the God-given faculty of one man's holding sway over the million by right of the possession of native power of body and soul.

Yet these instincts were only in accord with his ascendant and self-confident nature, nor did they really clash with his theories of universal freedom. The inconsistency was only in seeming. The million might be free, equal, and fraternal; society might be levelled, caste annihilated, and all relics of inherited rank and hereditary monarchy swept away. But there must be leaders; the very constitution of humanity demands the chief and the followers; so that then, according to the most elementary law of nature, the dominant spirits must come to the front, and the battle be to the strongest. Lusada's favourite castle in the air—though he was probably now to some extent conscious of the impossibility of its erection on earth—was his ideal Republic; but then it was to be *his* architecture, and *he* was to be chief thereof, and his nature was transparent enough for the egotism of the design to be perfectly evident, and yet never offensive, just because it was so transparent and sincere.

If Mr. Darrell agreed in nothing else, he went heartily with Lusada in his doctrine of loyal faith in the leaders of mankind—only it is probable that, if they had gone further into details of the subject, they would have diverged considerably in their ideas of whom and what these leaders should be.

On the whole, they all got on marvellously well with Julius Lusada.

"Proverbs are more expressive than elegant, as a rule," Isabel observed one day, "but there is one proverb of which this new intimacy so forcibly reminds me, I feel compelled to quote it. Can you guess it, Calla?"

"No," said Calla, running over in her mind two or three adages

all of which seemed of a nature too uncomplimentary to new friends to apply to their guest.

"It is a simile of the stables, as so many of them are," remarked Isabel, "and it begins with, 'One man——'"

"Ah, to be sure—I have it!" said Calla laughing, "and it fits the occasion very well. Joseph Smith, or any of our quiet, well-conducted neighbours round about, might not look over the hedge, but I think your dear parents would placidly allow Julius Lusada to take the horse and bridle and saddle him and ride him away."

They were talking of genealogy and old families once, and Mrs. Darrell observed incidentally (it was rarely that she spoke of herself or her family),

"I have a regular pedigree, emblazoned and illuminated on parchment, tracing our family back to the Conquest, put away somewhere. My poor father gave it to me; I keep it more for his sake than its own. I am not like a lady I once knew; she was a widow, and living on very small means, poor thing, and she was so afraid of not being taken for a lady born that she had her pedigree framed and hung up over her mantel-piece, where she could exhibit it to every visitor who came in."

"That was rather disproof than proof of her being thoroughbred, to my mind," said Calla.

"Well, poor soul, it was her weakness," responded Mrs. Darrell. "She had very few pleasures, and the study of her own family history was one of them; and she really did come of a good race."

Mrs. Darrell saw herself that this fact needed assurance.

"This rank of the old world is a strange thing," said Lusada, smiling. "It seems so odd to us, who do not possess, in your sense, such luxuries as great-great-grandfathers, to find 'these poor old dead' appealed to in proof of superiority. Now I, American and republican as I am, have a pedigree, though I can't trace it quite so far back as William the Conqueror. Curiously enough, though, I can go back on one side to my great-great-grandmother, who was a Klamat Indian. My father's mother came of a good old Spanish race, and circumstances led me to take their name. But I'm proudest, I own, of my Klamat ancestress."

"Indian—Spaniard! How do you come then by your light hair and eyes?"

"I suppose all my other progenitors happen to have been fair-haired, ruddy Saxons. Then on my mother's side, too, I have a strain of pure Anglo-Saxon blood of a good old British family; but as it comes on the female side, I guess that it doesn't count as anything, though I'm not very well up in your laws of genealogy."

"It is a lineal descent," said Mr. Darrell. "But landed property, as a rule, descends in the direct male line, you know, so you

could not claim any share in the estate, unless there is a special proviso to that effect."

"I'm too far off to have anything to claim," rejoined Lusada, smiling. "But through these fair-skinned Saxon ancestresses, I suppose it happens that the dark cross is not perceptible in me. But it may come out even two generations hence in my grandchildren. A cross in the race often completely drops, and then will reappear several generations down."

"It is a theory of mine," said Mr. Darrell, "that nothing dies out; every quality, peculiarity of temperament, race, or character, is hereditary. It may lapse for a generation, but every quality, good or bad, malady of mind or body, descends, if not to the children, to the grandchildren."

These remarks were received in a rather uncomfortable silence. Isabel's face clouded with gloomy abstraction. Mrs. Darrell and Calla smiled and nodded in a vague sort of assent, but were mutually and secretly embarrassed, both wishing to change the subject. both too conscious to attempt it.

Unsuspecting Mr. Darrell did not know that he was treading on delicate ground, and continued on the topic; but Julius Lusada saw and understood the shade on the ladies' looks, and flung himself into the breach to their relief.

"I've a curious anecdote, talking of crossing of races, that I think I have not told you," he said, and plunged immediately into a narrative of just the kind he knew was certain to distract and fix Mr. Darrell's attention.

He looked at Calla half inquiringly, as if in a mute appeal. "You understand my motive?" and she smiled comprehendingly back at him.

From the very first Julius Lusada had swayed a strong influence over Calla. And unto the very last Calla never quite understood that influence, and could never decide whether he possessed his power over her only reflectively, as her lover's friend, or by the right of his own irresistible attraction.

And over him certainly she held influence too. Julius Lusada's life had not been barren of love, and many faces of fair women held their places in his memory. But one like Calla he had never hitherto met. He had known and admired almost every type of women except just this one. Beauty, talent, courage, softness, passion, strength, purity, truth—not one of these qualities held aught of new or strange to him. And yet this girl, who did not surpass many another whom he had known, struck him with the interest of novelty. He had not met her like before. This girl whose dark passionate eyes had glowed with love for his absent friend, whose lovable lips parted in a beautiful listening hush at his mention of that friend's name—this girl so utterly innocent and

guileless, and yet so frank and free and gay—with her freshness and her fire, and the perfect purity that seemed to breathe in the very atmosphere around her—was something new to him.

To her, too, he was new and strange; and it was perhaps the sense in each of them that such as the other they had not known before—or, if known, had passed unnoticed—that chiefly, and even beyond association, drew them so irresistibly together.

One early evening, when he and the two girls were lingering on the lawn, while the red sun went down in a lurid lake of fire in the west, and the white moon sailed up slowly in the eastern sky, and the trees were all as still as sleep, Lusada was moved by the loveliness of the silent spring evening to utter a wish that he were away on an island in that glowing west, or rather, couching his wish in Byronic terms,

“That a desert were his dwelling-place,
With one fair spirit for his minister!”

“What an unsophisticated wish,” said Calla, with a ripple of gay girlish laughter in her voice, her eyes sparkling with irrepressible amusement, as a fancy picture occurred to her of certain of her admirers in her London circle—men who could criticize the sentiment as well as the rhythm of any emotional outburst, and wax eloquent on the expression of any given passion in poetry or prose—calmly uttering this poetic desire to her without the faintest sense of the ludicrous. Then, too, there was something very fascinating in venturing on mild inpertinences to this lion who was always so lamb-like to her, who, she knew well, had fangs and claws it would be dangerous to provoke, and who in her presence had always purred, and sheathed those claws in velvet.

“What an unsophisticated wish! You need not have told us you were only half civilized.”

Lusada hit near her thought as he replied,

“The men of your great city don’t own to the weakness of such wishes, I suppose?”

“No,” she said gravely. “Even if they wished to dwell on a desert island, they certainly wouldn’t be content with *one* ministering spirit.”

“Even in the world,” he suggested, smiling, “that might depend just a little on who the one was, mightn’t it?”

“Well, perhaps. But now, are you aware that if you wish to keep up your reputation for *uncivilization*, you really must not quote poetry.”

“Must I not? Is poetry a luxury forbidden to an uncouth Western barbarian? Why once the only book I had by me for hard on six months together was Byron.”

“I don’t wonder at your knowing him well then,” said Isabel. “I like poetry myself, but it always seems to me to fall short some-

where—I can't explain how. Only I never heard a line that gave me a *true* idea of the sea. I don't know any verse that would convey *perfectly* what that sky is now."

"How lovely it is!" said Calla, smiling dreamily, quite content in the beauty of setting sun and risen moon, without requiring a perfect description of it.

"Yes, it's beautiful here," he said. "How often I'll think of this quiet old garden when I'm far away." He paused, and then added, "Do you know that I've been here hard on two weeks? It's time for me to be gone, isn't it?"

He looked and spoke to Isabel, but Calla knew the remark was directed reflectively, in a round-the-corner way, to her, and knew that although his face was turned towards Isabel, his attention was fixed in another direction. This kind of mental squinting misleads a few people sometimes, but it was never known to mislead one from another when between the two there exists the mysterious instinct of mutual comprehension. Julius Lusada read every light and shade on Calla's face. Calla knew always what his silences meant as well as she knew the under-current of his words.

"It's time for me to be gone, isn't it?"

"No, not at all."

"Do you think, then, I may stay a day or two longer, Miss Isabel?"

"We all hope you will."

Lusada looked at Calla. Calla, looking at the unfolding buds of a syringa tree, was perfectly conscious that he was looking at her, but he did not speak to her, and waited in vain for her to speak to him.

"We shall be dull enough when you and Calla are both gone, and we are left all alone again," continued Isabel. "Calla insists upon running away from me this month. La Basse-Rive will be so lonely when she is gone."

"I can imagine that."

Isabel moved a step or two away, and stooped to pick a primula. Lusada took a step on his side nearer to Calla, who was still counting the syringa-buds.

"If I obeyed my wish, I should stay here till you go. You must see that."

"Why should you not stay?" she said, now lifting her frank, calm eyes to his, and then something in his glance recalled the glance of other eyes to her, and looking at him she looked past him, and away back down her life's path the memories of another season came over her, and though she added in a friendly tone, "Yes, do stay," her soul had wandered away from him, and her eyes were full of the past. He knew this well enough, and turned away towards Isabel, whose melancholy eyes, soft eyes that ever now

seemed to see sorrow ahead, were fixed on them. Cassandra-like, those large lovely eyes seemed to foreshadow trouble where they gazed.

"It is pleasant to have him here, is it not? Are you not glad he is not going yet?" said Calla afterwards, half shyly, half confidently, to Isabel.

"Yes, there are some happy days before you, Calla. But beyond them—?"

"Oh, Bell," said Calla coaxingly, yet perhaps a little impatiently, "I wish you would sometimes leave thinking of the *beyond*."

Meanwhile Lusada was thinking to himself, "I'll give myself a day or two yet. But it's time for me to be gone." He twisted his tawny moustache thoughtfully, and finished his soliloquy half impatiently—

"What the devil is there in the girl? She has fairly bewitched me."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"O ASK ME NOT TOO MUCH, MY LOVE!"

THE early May days glided away; the trees "hung all their leafy banners out;" and before the second week of May was over, the full glory of summer had burst upon the land.

"Oh, actually a rose!" cried Calla one morning, finding a little pink bud unfolding shyly in the sun by the shrubbery. "This tree is always one of the first to bloom. The very first rose of summer. No, pretty rosebud, I won't pick you. Wait and blossom. Oh, when the roses come, I always feel that I wish I had wings like a dove to flee away—not to *rest*, but to get up high above the earth. Summer is so beautiful!—and yet it makes one feel such keen aspirations towards some unknown thing more beautiful still."

Julius Lusada was the only auditor to whom these rambling remarks were addressed—or, rather, he had a share in their direction, for Calla was chattering on, half to him and half to herself. She was standing among the shrubs and flowers, exhilarated by the beauty of the day. She had caught the spirit of the scene, she was fresh as the opening rose, pure as the stainless azure of the sky, with the glow and passion of southern summer on her warm cheek and smiling lip, and in her deep dark eyes. She lifted those clear eyes up towards the infinite blue; but Lusada looked only upon her face, and gazed upon her with a mingling of passion for a thing most beautiful, with reverence for a thing most pure.

"Your nature is one that may know keen aspirations towards

unknown good," he said. "We coarser-fibred natures aspire only to the earthly good we can see and touch and comprehend. We do not idealize our summer into aspirations after the unknown, but personalize our summer into a woman. And we long to pluck our rosebud sometimes before it is in bloom," he added more slowly, looking intently at her.

"Some of you do," she responded, thinking of the soul that was akin to her own, the other half of her heart. But the thought of Felix never now in Lusada's presence brought pain. Lusada's influence was strong enough, when he was by her side, to pluck all sting from the memory which even his magnetic presence could not drive away.

"You are thinking of Felix," he said very gently, and even tenderly, but with a sort of sadness and pain in his grave blue eyes.

"I was," she admitted, with a pure, calm frankness that was to him so fascinating. "How is it that you can always read my thoughts?"

"Because——" he said, and his answer went no further than "because." "How is it," he added, replying to her question by another. "that *you* read a meaning in summer more than common people see in the simple blue skies and green trees? It is because you are *en rapport* with the summer. You were a flower once, I think, in the summer of some other world—a lily?"

He looked at her smilingly, yet earnestly, and she knew that he knew her old sweet pet name.

"Do you believe in sympathies, and antipathies, and unaccountable influences?" she asked rather hurriedly, so as not to dwell upon that branch of the subject, and her glance fled in a new, shy tremor away from the mesmeric force of his.

"Thoroughly," he said. "I know surely when people will like me, and when I shall have an influence over them."

"What a delightful gift!" she answered more lightly.

"Which?—the influence, or the knowledge of it?" he rejoined.

"Both; but most the influence. Yet I don't know but that it is the very confidence and assurance of power that creates the power."

"Am I so self-confident then?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, smiling up in his face, "you are. And without that self-confidence," she added meditatively, "perhaps you would not possess the influence you do."

"I have had influence over many people, I know," he said; "I always recognize the personalities that will respond to mine. But that I have *some* influence is all of which I can ever feel assured. I only know the fact, not the degree. I never know how far my influence will go."

"A long way, or no way at all," said Calla. "You are not a person to have a *half* influence over any human creature," she continued thoughtfully.

"It is a case of *all* or *none*, you think?" he said. "And you may be right; but which?"

The question was so indefinite it would have been perplexing to answer. Calla made not the slightest attempt either to understand or answer it. A light flush flickered on her cheek; her eyes again wandered away to escape his gaze, and she moved a step nearer to the flower-border. Half embarrassed, she stretched her hand towards the first rosebud, and then remembered her playful promise to it, and laughed and drew back her hand.

"No, I will not pick it. I will let it bloom into a beautiful flower, and I will wear it in my hair then."

Lusada naturally remarked, "Happy rose!" for he was scarcely civilized enough to see that he was committing the error of saying exactly what any other man would have said. And Calla laughed, and flung up her pretty head with all her old freedom and grace, and smiled into his eyes.

She was not sad now; and all this perfect May-day she was singularly happy.

Summer! gorgeous summer in its full glow and glory! Sweet scents in the air—soft rain of peach and apple blossoms—intensity in the blue deeps of the sky—passion in the burning gold of the sun! And, ever near her, Julius Lusada, and over her in the present his magnetic inexplicable influence, and in her past a deep, deep memory from which his presence plucked the sting! With all this, she might well be happy.

The lovely day wore on to lovelier night. The scarlet rose of sunset folded its floating leaves and faded from the sapphire sky, and the veil of evening fell softly over earth and heaven, and clad both in unutterable beauty. Was ever beauty perfect without shadow?—was ever a life rounded to completion till the sacred mysteries of love and sorrow had hallowed it?

Calla leaned out of the window and looked up at the waxing moon that was just disentangling itself from the topmost branches of the trees.

Then Julius Lusada's tall, dark figure emerged from the shadows, and crossed the patch of moonlight on the lawn and came under the window.

He looked at the white figure in its supple grace, framed as it were, by the square lines of the window, at the face that half lost itself in shade, bending down to watch him as he drew near, at the bare, beautiful arms, from which the transparent sleeves fell back, resting on the sill and shining white and perfect as marble in the moonbeams.

"Won't you come out, Miss Calla?" he said, with an unusual softness in the accents that to her at least were always gentle.

"It is lovely out, isn't it?" she answered.

"Lovely! Come," he said persuasively.

Calla hesitated a moment, not in any reluctance. Then she drew back from the window, robbing the frame of its picture; but he who, looking up, watched the fair figure vanish away, saw the frame left empty without a regret. She flung a light scarf round her, and passed down into the garden.

The red spark of a cigar guided her to where he stood awaiting her in the shadows on the lawn. As she approached, the spark flashed away and fell and lost itself in the darkness as he tossed it from his hand.

"Ah! good child, you have put a shawl on! Else I should have had to send you back, for this European moonlight is cold. I wish it were the glorious moon of the tropics looking down upon us now! I wish those were the great tropical stars over our heads. You do not know what starlight is, here!"

He spoke more impetuously than was usual with him; he took her hand and drew it softly through his arm, and turned and led her away, walking rather quickly, possibly to get speedily out of sight of the house before anybody could join them, in case other members of the household should deem a stroll by moonlight enjoyable too, and should be sociably inclined. He led her to a path known somewhat grandiloquently as "The Avenue."

Now, the avenue was neither more nor less than a long, straight path at the end of the garden, skirting the boundary-paling, wide enough for two or three people to walk, and completely shadowed and shut in by overarching trees. Consequently, notwithstanding the May moon, it was dark, except in two places where other paths intersected it, and where thus two broad bars of moonlight struck across the shadow.

Lusada had fallen into silence by the time they reached the avenue; he uttered no further hankerings after the planetary display of other climes, and they walked up and down for a turn or two without any nearer approach to conversation than a remark upon the beauty of the night. At last he said—

"I go to-morrow."

"Must you?"

"Unless you bid me stay."

Calla made no answer, so there was a silence again. When the silence had lasted a minute, she found it embarrassing, and half wished to break it. But somehow now she could not. She wanted to speak, but something—not agitation, for her heart was steady and her pulse calm—not shyness, nor fear, for shyness and fear were little known to Calla—but something unexplained and undefinable

held her silent. Silence is dangerous. The longer it lasted, the more impossible it seemed to be broken; and still she wished to break it, and still felt herself unable.

They were only black ghosts to each other, except when they passed the corners where the stream of moonlight struck across. It was long now since either of them had uttered a word; but he spoke, as if adding to his last remark:

"You do not wish me to stay, I see."

The silence once broken, Calla could answer back.

"Are you sure of that?" she said softly, with just a little tremor of embarrassment or hesitation in her tones.

"Do you?" he asked, stopping as they crossed the bar of moonlight, and looking down at her white-draped figure, and her fair face, and shadowy hair.

"I should like you to stay—a little longer," she said, more slowly and less steadily; and her eyes drooped as she averted her face a little, and stepped on, as if to draw him out of the light.

He made no objection, and passed on with her into the shade again. But as the shadows closed over them his strong hand fell lightly on her slim fingers, and rested there tenderly, as if touching a full-blown rose that a touch would shatter. Her fingers quivered ever so little under his, and then his stole softly round them, pressed them close, and the slender hand lay unresistingly in the strong hand's clasp.

They were coming near to the next broad bar of moonlight. Which of them was it who lingered first? Did she half hesitate, and hang back shyly, lest the light should strike on the united hands?—or was it he who slackened pace? Anyhow, it was he who stopped; it was he who, on the verge of the moonlight, drew her back into the shadow. The hand that held hers pressed it closer, trembled, and released it suddenly. Then, in the darkness, so dense they could not see each other's faces, he drew her to him, and folded his arms round her.

He did not kiss her, but holding her close to his heart, his hand caressed, with a sort of passionate, yet most reverent tenderness, the soft, dark, loosely-braided hair of the drooping head.

Calla submitted to the caress in silence, quite unresistingly, quite unresponsively. She did not make the faintest attempt to release herself; she did not cling to him nor shrink from him. She was absolutely, simply passive, as if he had magnetized her into a trance. Yet her heart beat heavily, her breath came short and broken, so that she could scarcely have spoken, even if she would.

"Calla-lily—you are not angry? Not angry with me for loving you?"

At the word "loving" from Lusada's lips, at the closer clasp in which he involuntarily held her as he uttered it, she trembled, and

her own lips parted as if to speak, and the blood flashed up from her heart, and flushed warm in her face. And through and above the blank entranced chaos of her mind there pierced one clear thought—"Felix!"

Felix was present to her spirit then, as present as though his living voice had called her; yet there was neither excitement nor pain in her thought of him; it was as if she were reading an old story in a book, an old story strangely vivid and graphic, that told of a lover who had whispered love-words—how long ago?—in a garden like this, to a girl—was the girl herself?

She turned her head tremulously, and silently, softly, quiveringly, she shrank a shade away from Lusada. By that silence and that shrinking she forced him—half fearful that she resented his conduct, half hoping the contrary—to speak again, to urge her in low, impetuous, eager tones, more agitated than she had ever heard his voice before.

"Are you angry, my lily, my love? Say, do you think bad of me for this?"

"No, I am not angry," said Calla faintly; and then, slowly and softly, obeying a resistless influence, she lifted her drooped head, and raised her eyes to the face above her, that yet she could not see for the darkness. If there had been light, perhaps she would not have had the courage to lift her eyes.

Lusada bent his head, and with gentle but insisting and resolute hand, upturned her face to his and kissed her.

When that first kiss of his touched her lips, she shrank away tremblingly for an instant—it seemed a faithlessness to Felix—but the next moment the magnetic sway he held over her arose and conquered all feelings besides. In sudden abandonment to the impulse of the moment, in utter surrender to his influence, her head sank on his strong, broad shoulder, and her up-looking eyes strove to pierce the darkness, and gaze upon his face.

She knew then well that when the words came that must be said, her answer would be the answer his heart desired; and when that moment did come, and he said, "Calla, is there a chance that I may win you for my wife?" she whispered, "Yes." But when he asked, "And will you love me as you loved Felix?" her hand strove to twist itself out of his, and she answered not a word.

"Calla," he said earnestly but calmly, "has all your love been spent and lavished in the past?"

She raised her head, and answered frankly, boldly, with a sort of defiance in her tones,

"I liked you first for his sake. You know it well; you were welcome to me as his friend. I liked you through him—I loved him in you. Let there always be truth between us. You know this, and you know—you must know—that now"—her voice sank

soft and tremulous—"though *he* is all the past, now *you* fill up all the present to me, and I could never say you nay, even if you asked me for my life."

So freely Calla, in the daring faith that only perfect truth and stainless innocence can know, acknowledged to Julius Lusada the almost limitless influence he had attained over her. For whether she fully loved him or not, she was fascinated by him, and in his presence his influence over her was supreme.

Other women had avowed their love for him ere now, in shyness or in passion, in blushes or in tears; and some of these had found him fickle, and some had found him true. Some had found him over cold, and some over jealous, for their peace. But this girl's open frankness, the candour born of innocence that is purer than mere ignorance, and trust that is nobler than mere credulity—this candour as far removed from boldness as from bashfulness, swayed over him an influence that very few had done. And all the response he made to her avowal was to raise her hand to his lips, and kiss it as reverently as if she had been the ghost of a martyred saint.

BOOK VI.

"ONE GOLDEN JUNE OF JUNES."

"Whether at Naishápur or Babylon,
Whether the cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

"Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regret and future fears;
To-morrow! Why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's seven thousand years!

"Yesterday *this* day's madness did prepare—
To-morrow's silence, triumph, or despair.
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why—
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where!"
Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.

CHAPTER XIX.

"A NIGHT OF MEMORIES AND OF SIGHS."

JULIUS LUSADA did not fulfil his intention of leaving the château on the morrow. But it happened only two or three days after that moonlight walk that it was suddenly settled for him and Calla to leave La Basse-Rive, and travel together to London, whither Calla was summoned by a letter from her aunt, to come with all speed, for her errant father had at last made up his mind to fulfil his chronic intention of returning; he had written from New York, to say that he was about to sail, and might be expected in London a few days after his letter, wherefore his daughter was sent for in haste. And Julius Lusada also was bound for London, and who could be so fitting an escort for Calla as her avowed and acknowledged lover? For the aspect of affairs between these two young people (if this adjective may be considered as applicable to Lusada, whose age appeared as uncertain and mysterious as his life and history) needed no formal proclamation to explain it. Their mutual interest and understanding made it self-evident, and it is significant of the singularly favourable and friendly light in which Julius

Lusada, unknown adventurer as he was, was viewed at the château, that no alarm was taken, no warnings offered, nor obstacles set up. The Darrells, if a little surprised—for they had somehow been inclined to regard Lusada as outside the pale of love and betrothal and marriage—were not wholly taken aback. They held doubtfully aloof from interfering, consulted together vaguely as to whether they had not better “let things drift,” and whether they might not do harm by mixing in the matter, and adopted the safe medium of reserving their opinion. Mrs. Darrell indeed seemed gratified. It was with a kind of relief, as if her conscience had reproached her hitherto, that she traced the light of a new hope, and a tremulous, and yet half-doubtful joy, on Calla's face.

Their last night all together at La Basse-Rive had come. It was a lovely mild May night; the moonlight poured in at the open window around which they sat; the nightingale's song from the shades of the garden trees came clear across the still air in a piercing ecstasy of sweetness that was almost pain. They listened quietly, sitting almost in silence, the sense of its being the eve of a parting—though the parting was only the severance of a friendship swift and recent of growth—breathing insensibly around them that soft shadow

“That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles rain.”

The last time of everything—even to the lightest daily duty and pleasure, “the level of every day's most quiet need—is too sad for us ever to care to realize the fulness of the fact that it is the last. It is well it is not present to us at our passing good-byes and casual parting words, that each may be the last, that the hand we loose so carelessly and cordially we may never clasp again, the good-night kiss we lay so gaily on smiling lips may be the seal on a farewell till the morning of eternity shall waken all sleepers.

None of the little circle listening to the nightingale in the May moonlight could know that indeed it *was* the last time that by moon or starlight they five should meet together. Yet over them all the sense of the possibilities that hang round ever so brief a parting brooded more or less—heaviest perhaps on Isabel, more lightly on Calla, who stood in the dawn of a new day, lightest of all on Lusada, in the very noon of love and triumph. Yet even in him there was a half-hidden spring of sentiment, shallow, perhaps, but genuine enough while its brief ripple lasted, that caused him to catch readily the tone of the others' thoughts.

The nightingale's song was dying away, the shrill, sweet notes broke rarer and rarer, and more and more distant on their ears; they began to shake off the silence that had hung over them. In the mysterious moonlight that made familiar things look strange,

Isabel, whose imagination delighted in the weird, and mystic, and supernatural, piloted the conversation in that direction. Lusada related the story of a phantom vessel, a kind of Flying Dutchman of the South Pacific, in which he appeared to have implicit faith; but his authority being only second-hand hearsay, did not impress the Darrells as unimpeachable, and he did not succeed in communicating his faith to them, with the exception of Isabel, who was always ready to believe the marvellous.

"I, for my part, never believe in anything," said Mrs. Darrell leisurely. "There is so much imposture in the world, and the two classes of miracle-mongers, those who delude themselves and those who delude others, are so large, that I have never yet succeeded in sifting a grain of truth out of all the chaff that gets blown about the world from the wandering fortune-telling gipsy up to the amateur spiritualist."

"There is an enormous amount of imposture around, certainly," admitted Lusada, "but yet I think Hamlet wasn't far wrong. There are a good many 'more things than are dreamt of in our philosophy!' I hold, and I fancy I'm not alone in my belief, that, under all the impostures and delusions that are, a great truth lies hidden somewhere close to us, if we could only find where to touch the spring."

"Yes," said Isabel dreamily; "between world and world, the known and the unknown, the present and the mysterious future, there must be *some* hidden link, if our mortal eyes could but find it."

"If there be a predestined future," said Lusada, going off on the same tack, "I think that here and there some human creature of finer and more spiritual fibre than the rest may have the gift of piercing the shadows ahead and reading omens. I have heard odd things in the way of prophecy among the Indians that I can't account for in any reasonable way."

"Tell us some," said Isabel.

"Well, now, for instance, there was an old woman in Nevada—a Piute squaw, who professed to have the gift of second sight, or whatever you call it—the gift of foretelling people's fate sometimes (she couldn't always do it). One night a whole party of us were trying her—the spirit was on her that night, and she picked out all those of us that were to come to a violent end. There were six of us that she said were under the mark of a violent death. You may say it was a tolerably safe prophecy considering the life we led! and that's true enough. But now, here is the bare, frozen fact: two out of the six were shot within a year, the third was killed in an explosion on board a Mississippi boat—the boiler blew up—the fourth was drowned."

"And the other two?"

"The fifth I've not heard from lately, but I suppose if his fate had found him I should have heard of it somehow, and the sixth—well, I'm not dead yet."

"You were the sixth, then? I fancied so," said Isabel.

"Who was the *fifth*?" asked Calla.

"You mean, was it Felix?" responded Lusada, with the startling frankness that occasionally took even Calla by surprise.

"No, it was not Felix; he's safely out of it."

"That is really a very singular coincidence," observed Mrs. Darrell. "I should hope and believe that the prophecy has exhausted its truth on the first four victims."

"Do you believe in prophetic dreams?" asked Isabel of Lusada.

"Well, I can't say I ever had any myself," he replied discreetly.

"I think I am what they call a true dreamer," she observed meditatively. "I notice my dreams generally come to something; the future always wears round to some shape, of which I had a veiled, mystic kind of hint in my dreams."

"The future takes shape from the past, my dear child," said her stepfather kindly, "and such dreams can be only a reflection of that past in which the seed of the future was sown. There is only one class of superstitions in which I am inclined to have any faith—that is, the strange, and sometimes remarkably authenticated, stories connected with old families, and the old houses those same families have inhabited for generation after generation. As regards those, I admit I find it difficult to be altogether incredulous."

"Yes, I've heard many such stories," said Lusada. "Not so much in my part of the world, of course. But I've been pretty well posted in such things by a real good old English family I was staying with—I'm a connection of theirs on the female side—the Godwyns, of Godwyn Grange."

"Godwyn Grange? Ah! yes, a H—shire family? they spell their name with a y," said Mr. Darrell, who was well up in the lore of old families, who, indeed, was a living encyclopædia of genealogy, and could turn over the leaf of his mind at the oldest extinct peerage, or trace the descent—if there were one to trace—of the most modern addition to the ranks of nobility.

"Yes. I told you once, I think," continued Lusada, "that I had a strain of pure old Anglo-Saxon blood in me. My grandfather married a daughter of a younger branch of the Godwyns; the family seemed to have been a tree of many branches in those days. It was a runaway match, I believe; he took her out to America. Now that branch has died off, and there's only the present family left; but all the same, you see, my mother's mother was a Godwyn."

Three days ago Calla, who had a knack of hitting straight home

to Lusada's weak points, would have observed demurely, "I thought a Republican scorned pedigree;" but now she bridled her tongue. Lusada continued, with some interest, as if a new thought had struck him,

"And, by the way, now this is another real strange coincidence—you know I was telling you only now about the old squaw's prophecy and the picked half-dozen of us who are bound to come to grief? Well, one fellow, you know, was drowned; it was about a year and a half ago on the voyage from Panama to Melbourne, in the wreck of the 'Calypso,' and that was Percy Godwyn! Now the Godwyns have a superstition that when a death's going to take place in their family, strange lights are seen about the old house. And I have it from Arnold Godwyn, poor Percy's nephew, who's now master of the Grange—Percy Godwyn was a younger brother, and the scapegrace of the family, I fancy—went out to Australia when he was quite a young fellow and never came back to the Old World. Well—but, as I was saying, Arnold Godwyn told me that at the very time of Percy's death, long before they heard of the wreck in England, these lights were seen!—seen through the windows of uninhabited rooms, and through the chinks of the doors at dead of night, and down the corridors when not a soul was stirring."

"Mamma," said Isabel softly, but anxiously, "what is the matter?"

None of them had been looking at Mrs. Darrell while Lusada told his tale. None of them had noticed when or how that deadly paleness had come over her face, and that fixed and expressionless look, as though sternly repressing some emotion, hardened her eyes and lips. In the cold, white moonlight her cold, white face might have passed unobserved, had not Isabel, with the keen instinct of love, noticed the utter immobility in which her mother sat—with her face turned towards Lusada, scarcely breathing, seeming paralyzed—and looked intently in her mother's face, and seen those dilated eyes and painfully set lips.

"Isn't your mother well?" asked Mr. Darrell, in surprise at Isabel's question. "Hey, Gertrude, is there anything the matter?"

She looked round with a petulant contraction of the brows that was rare in her.

"No," she said, more sharply than usual, "What should be the matter? Don't interrupt Mr. Lusada's story. I was getting interested in it. It sounds really well-authenticated. These lights—" she paused, as if somehow losing the thread of her speech—"these lights," she repeated vaguely, and then, with a spasmodic sort of interest that was not feigned, and yet seemed forced and unnatural—"And you were staying in the house, staying with the present proprietor?"

"Yes, and a right good fellow he is—just the soul of hospitality.

I knew him in New York, where, on the strength of our cousinship, we became real good friends. He wants me to make Godwyn Grange my home while I'm in England. I'm going to take Felix down there some day. They ought to know each other. Felix might make a story about the old house," pursued Lusada conversationally.

"Yes, he might," said Mrs. Darrell, with an unnatural lightness in her tone, and a sort of gasping catch of the breath, which Isabel, and not Isabel alone, observed.

"Mamma, dear," she said gently, but very positively, laying her hand on her mother's hand, "I am quite sure you are not feeling well. Your hand is as cold as ice. Will you not like to sit back on your own sofa?"

Mrs. Darrell sat quite still, with her proud head erect, and her cold hands steadily clasped in her lap, for a few minutes. Then she rose up from her chair, but leant her arm on the back of it as if to gain some support.

"I do not feel very well," she acknowledged, speaking with careful firmness. "My head has been very bad all the evening. But you know I hate to be made a fuss about. Perhaps I had better go and lie down a little."

She swept across the room with her head carried as loftily as usual, tall and queenly, with her rich black silk robes trailing after her. But as she passed through the door, Isabel noticed that she swayed, and seemed to falter; and before she was half-way up the staircase, Isabel was at her side, and quietly supporting her; and so, hand in hand, mother and daughter reached Mrs. Darrell's room together.

There, as she crossed her own threshold, all her gathered strength deserted her. Suddenly, and without a word, she seemed to collapse and give way at once: her clasp of Isabel's hand relaxed, and she sank down insensible.

It was quite a new thing to Isabel to see her mother faint; fainting-fits were of very rare occurrence at La Basse-Rive. However, Isabel was not one of the nervous and hysterical and helpless class, and instead of ringing and calling for help, she bathed her mother's brow, held *sal volatile* to her nostrils, and soon succeeded in bringing her back to her senses. She was glad that she had done this herself without summoning any assistance, when Mrs. Darrell, reviving said anxiously—

"No one is here but you?"

"No dear."

"No one has been here?"

"No."

"Have I—have I—spoken?"

"No, dear, not a word."

"Mother, darling," Isabel added after a pause. "what is the matter? Tell me."

Mrs. Darrell looked up at her with large, steady eyes.

"My head," she said faintly, moaningly. "It was the pain made me turn faint. It is like red-hot knives running through my temples. You can do nothing for it—but a dark room—and rest. And then always when I feel ill I am nervous; and that ghastly story—of the haunted house—and the lights!" She shuddered, no affected shudder, and Isabel understood, and was re-assured. Her mother's explanation sounded natural enough; indeed, what other explanation could there be? What could there be in those passing allusions to a name, a house, a ghost-story, to have affected her? Isabel's wonder was set completely at rest.

"You shall have a dark room, and lie quiet, dear," she said: "and I will sit by you till you sleep."

"No, no," Mrs. Darrell protested emphatically, with a touch of petulance of faintness in her tone. "No, Bell, I will not have you stay with me! I tell you—I beg you, dear, *leave me!*"

Isabel left her accordingly.

The little circle downstairs were waiting anxiously for Isabel's return, and for her account of Mrs. Darrell's indisposition. Being re-assured by her conviction that it was only a passing attack of faintness and headache, and being especially requested not to disturb her by going up to inquire, they fell back into their conversation, narrated and listened to more anecdotes of the natural and supernatural, and sat up unusually late on this their last night together, so late that before they retired to rest Mrs. Darrell was quite restored and pronounced herself perfectly well again, and only in need of a good night's rest.

The next morning she arose at her usual time, indeed somewhat earlier than usual, and betook herself to Calla's room. There she found everything in "most admired disorder;" toilette bottles, inkstands, the little morning breakfast-tray, a workbox and a desk jostled each other on the dressing-table; every chair was converted into a table; and Calla was busily endeavouring to disentangle from a mass of millinery what was her own and what was Isabel's. She was rather behind hand with her packing, not having found the distraction of the last few days conducive to even the mild amount of method necessary to collect a scattered wardrobe from various corners of a large and straggling house.

"I am not going to detain you from your packing, my dear," said Mrs. Darrell. "I know you are busy; but just the last moments of departure are always so hurried, I thought I would come in and have a few words with you now."

"Dear Mrs. Darrell, how pale you are still! Why did you not lie in bed this morning?" asked Calla, affectionately.

"My head is so much better, dear; it is not worth thinking of it any more. I came to you because I wanted to tell you, my child, how truly I wish you all happiness. You see I regard this matter gravely. I think you are not a girl for capricious flirtations or foolish fancies?" she continued, half-interrogatively. "I take it for granted that this is serious."

"Yes," said Calla, pale, and with fluttering breath, and a perceptible quivering of the lips, as she had never looked when they spoke to her of Felix, "it is serious."

"And—you are happy, Calla?"

"Yes."

"I am glad," said Mrs. Darrell earnestly. "I am very—very glad. Sometimes I have regarded myself as in some measure responsible for that early disappointment of yours. I have thought that if it had not been for me, the opportunities would never have been given for that attachment to have arisen which I have sometimes feared might cast a cloud over the spring of your life. But it was April with you, my child, was it not? This is the mid-summer! You will be happy now!"

The girl looked up at her with a shadow of pain in her eyes.

"Don't think of *me*!" she said impetuously, "I—yes, I am happy," she hurried on quickly; "but it is not I—"

"Not *you* who have had the most to suffer?" said Mrs. Darrell gravely. "No, you are right, dear, it was never you. But enjoy *your* sunshine, Calla. We in the shadows shall only rejoice to see you happy."

To neither of the two did it seem to occur for a moment that part, at least, of the shadows which clouded Mrs. Darrell's life were self-made, and that in her self-created sorrow others, more innocent in their truth than she in her secrecy, had been involved. Nay, it seemed to Calla so noble and beautiful in Felix's mother to wish her happiness with those deep and earnest loving eyes, that her own eyes dimmed suddenly with a mist of unshed tears that never brimmed and fell.

"But, Calla, dear," Mrs. Darrell continued, "one word I have to say to you—one caution to give. It is not in warning, dear, nor do I wish to interfere with your course of conduct in any way; only, does it not occur to you that, under the circumstances, although I am well aware how long and how intimately their friendship had endured, yet still, now that things have assumed another aspect, for the very sake of the security of that friendship—"

Mrs. Darrell was so unusually long in getting to her point, and arrived there by so broken a journey, that Calla was fain to assist her to her goal.

"I see what you mean," she said, slowly and rather proudly.

"You mean that you think that intimacy had better be slackened now?"

"Between you and Julius Lusada, if you really mean to marry him, on one side, and Felix on the other—yes, I do think an intimacy and frequent meetings would be indiscreet at the present time," Mrs. Darrell responded plainly at last.

"There is little chance of frequent meetings. We go to England; Felix is in Athens," said Calla, in a tone a shade more cold than ordinary. "And even if it were otherwise——"

"You would not take my advice," Felix's mother said with a half-bitter sigh. "Yet it is for your own sake, my dear, I caution you. You hear how Mr. Lusada speaks of Felix; you see his inclination will be to introduce him into his own set, to make him known right and left among his own friends, to mix their two circles together. I am afraid, Calla, this will not be well. Let Felix move in his own circle, and Julius Lusada keep to his; it will be happier for you all. Now I have said my say, and it is done with. But I trust you are not vexed, dear child? On this last morning I would not for the world say anything to hurt you."

"Vexed! Dearest Mrs. Darrell, *could* I be vexed with *you*?" said Calla, the shade of proud reserve melting instantly away, and lost and forgotten in her usual loving warmth. "Kiss me now, and *trust* me. I hope there will be no great difficulties in my path, but if there are, I will walk as cautiously as possible, I promise."

Mrs. Darrell, to judge by the look of repressed anxiety that still saddened her eyes, did not think this form of promise eminently satisfactory. However, she kissed Calla, and generously adhered to her assurance of having "said her say, and done with it."

Mr. Darrell had also *his* say ready when he caught Calla for a minute alone, before she and Lusada started on their journey. His say, however, was a brief one.

"My dear child," he observed solemnly, "allow an old man to give you his advice. I have held cautiously aloof from interfering with you always, as you know, but your father left you in our charge, and I think myself justified in impressing upon you my most earnest advice in this matter. Your father must soon return. Do not bind yourself by any *unconditional* promises, or avow any engagement to your friends in London until you have obtained your father's full sanction. You remember, my child, that on a former occasion—which I do not mind alluding to now that your present prospects prove that episode is so satisfactorily done with—my sentiments were the same."

"Yes," said Calla, wincing a little, though imperceptibly, "I remember quite well."

But she wished she had forgotten, and that others, too, would forget.

CHAPTER XX.

“WITH A PAIN THAT STINGS LIKE JOY.”

OF her conversation with Mrs. Darrell, Calla thought little or nothing more. Not that she forgot it—but she was young enough and sanguine enough to own the happy knack of putting away out of her thoughts any useless calculations on unpleasant possibilities. Her course looked smooth enough now—she did not care to trouble herself about possible breakers that might be ahead, or rocks that might be submerged under the fair-looking waters.

So she let Mrs. Darrell's caution drift out of her mind when she left La Basse-Rive with her lover. Perhaps she did not find his society conducive to quiet reflection. As to Mr. Darrell's good advice concerning the desirability of observing a certain measure of reserve upon her understanding with Julius Lusada until her father's sanction should ratify it into a due betrothal, this counsel was by no means as unpalatable as an old friend's volunteered advice is generally found to be.

Neither Lusada nor Calla cared as yet whether their understanding was avowed or unavowed, or called or not called an engagement. Calla was not likely to be more anxious as to publicity and formality in this, her second attachment, than she had been in those first hopes wherein she then thought she had spent all her heart. And in Julius Lusada's creed there were no such things as conditional and unconditional promises—a pledge was given as you give a rose—the receiver might throw the rose away when it faded, or treasure it till death. A woman loved, or did not love; a man accepted her promises, or released her from them. A woman, weaker than a man, had an all-potent claim on his forbearance and his chivalry. A man had no such thing as a right over a woman's love, if that love were not given to him freely.

“Love me or leave me, Calla,” he had said to her once; “but tell me which it is to be—soon?”

“How soon?”

“Oh! within a few days, or weeks, or months. I'll give you time to measure how much you like me.”

That “how much” was a difficult question, and one which Calla herself would probably have been more puzzled than any one else to answer. The degree of her love for Lusada seemed impossible to measure aught.

Sometimes it appeared to her that this new love stirred her nature with a deeper passion than even her first love had ever done.

Sometimes, on the other hand, the sacred halo, that still and ever clung around the old love, beamed so brightly as to cast this new light into eclipse. At such times it seemed still as if Lusada were only beloved through Felix, and dear for Felix's sake. Yet when his hand clasped hers, and his eyes looked into hers, he filled her heart—he completed her life; there was no room for any thought save of him. When the magnetism of his touch, the magic of his compelling eyes, was removed from her, the old memories flowed back as surely and resistlessly as the returning sea flows over the level sands the ebb-tide has left dry.

Calla did not understand herself; it was as if she had lost herself suddenly in new and unexpected under-currents and whirling eddies, where she had only anticipated clear, still depths. A feeling of self-perplexity, a vague sense of inconstancy and self-reproach for the power which Felix's friend had obtained over her, lay at her heart in a troubled, restless wonder, which only Julius Lusada's words and caresses could banish.

She stood leaning over the bulwarks of the steamer with him as they crossed the Channel homewards. It was night, a calm, lovely night, and Calla and many other ladies came on deck, and left the cabin to the stewardess, and the hopelessly bad sailors, and the people who preferred—perhaps sensibly—sleep to starlight.

Yet the night seemed too lovely to be wasted on slumber. One can sleep in fog and rain. The light white foam on the waves that fled from the steamer's sides shone fair in the misty moonlight; the distant ships slid by like silent spectres; the last of land was vanishing in a cloud; and on the shoreless horizon the sky and sea melted together in a purple haze.

“Ah,” said Lusada, turning his face to the salt, sweet breeze, “this is good! But you can never realize thoroughly the delights of a sea-voyage until you are riding on the long swell of the Pacific waves a thousand miles from land. ‘Only a plank between you and destruction,’ as they say, but it never was a sailor who said it. And the sense of the danger is half the delight! And you cannot disbelieve that the vessel is a living thing that joys to go leaping over the waves; and you feel a part of the freedom and the boundlessness all round you.”

“Shall we go?” asked Calla, nestling a little closer to his side.

“Shan't we, darling? All round the world, some day—if you are not afraid. Would you have any fear, Calla, of sleeping in a tent while my men kept guard around?—of gathering round the camp fire, just you and I and my handful of followers, alone, a hundred miles from any habitation?”

“I should never, never know any fear with you.”

“Ah, that is good to hear you say! How good to think that when I go seeking my fortunes again—for the day will come, I suppose,

before I die, when the old life will draw me back—that I shall not go alone! In my wild wanderings I shall have the bravest and the gentlest of little ladies by my side—I who have wandered over all the world alone. And now that I stand here with you, my Calla-lily, the old adventurous, wild life looks so far off and strange -- and yet how vividly in my mind's eye I see the old days still!"

He was staring away over the grey, mysterious midnight sea, and Calla knew well that he was looking through the shadows into the old days, and that in one moment his spirit had fled a hemisphere away from her, and plunged back into some wild adventure on the other side of the world.

"What a past you must have!" she said half sally—she could not help a little grudging his thoughts so suddenly lavished on that past—and half longingly, with girlish yearning to follow those thoughts. "How I should like to trace out all your life and know it all from the very beginning!"

"I'm glad you can't."

"Why?" she asked, with a wondering look like a child, not so much hurt as puzzled and astonished. And having uttered the "why?" she wished she had not said it, and could have answered her question for herself.

"Some of my past lies open for you to enter and take possession of," he answered, "but not *all*. No, Calla," he added gravely and tenderly, "I do not even now promise to give you all my life; but I give you all the best of it."

He paused and waited for an answer; but Calla was leaning with folded arms on the bulwarks and looking away from him out to sea, as he had looked a little while previously. But he knew very well that *her* thoughts had not fled away from *him*, although her face might be averted.

"Will you not be content?" he said gently, bending closer to her, "would you not rather have the pure gold than the rough ore? I will give you all the gold of my nature, Calla. Take the best of me; it is yours."

"If I give myself to you, I give *all* myself," she said softly, and rather sadly, but with no touch of reproach or petulance.

"Because you are all gold, my pure little lily. Heart of gold to him who wins it. But *is* it mine, Calla? that little heart of yours?"

The sense of uncertainty, the troubled wonder that she could not better comprehend herself, held Calla silent. Surely she loved him; and her days of girlish shyness were past; and yet she could not answer him in plain words that her heart was all and entirely his.

No one was near them on the deck at this time and in the dusk of night, in the silence only broken by the throbbing of the engines, the creak of the wheel, and the soft hissing splash of the water, they stood together and felt alone in the crowded vessel.

Julius Lusada put his arm round Calla's waist and drew her to him gently, and spoke her name in low, caressing tones. And his eyes compelled her to raise her own eyes to his; and though still she did not speak, he had his answer, an answer plainly given by the little hand that sought and rested in his, and the silent lips that gave him a sweeter assurance than words.

Possibly he might have liked to have the assurance in words as well; but he had to be content, and was not ungrateful enough to be discontented with that mute eloquence.

Arrived in London they found that Mr. Yorke was daily expected; and Mrs. King was eagerly waiting for her niece, and interested in the new story her niece had to tell, which perhaps, owing to the tone of Calla's recent letters, was scarcely much of a surprise to her.

Calla rather dreaded the explanation to her father of the new aspect of affairs, and the introduction of Julius Lusada as her lover. It was not that she stood at least in awe of that dearly-loved father—so much better beloved, perchance, than if he had been a better man—or was in any way afraid of his playing the new rôle of the stern parent. But she remembered so well the letter she had written asking his consent to her engagement with Felix Grey—the carelessly loving and freely consenting letter he had written back. And now that he was returning, she felt it would be rather awkward to introduce at once another lover for his approval. She felt as if he might paraphrase Hamlet's remark, "What, dead four months and not forgotten yet? Why, then, a good man may be remembered half a year; but, by r'ally, he must build churches!"

To be sure there lay eighteen months between the time that she had asked her father to sanction her engagement with Felix Grey, and this time that she would make a precisely similar request with regard to Julius Lusada. But what if that eighteen months seemed little or nothing to her father in his careless, roving life? What if she should read, or fancy she read, in his eyes a reproach for her fickleness, or, worse, far worse, a half-surprised congratulation upon it.

This fancy troubled Calla a little. But she forgot the trouble in the delight of her father's return. He came, hearty and bronzed, and sunburnt and healthy, came with his genial voice hailing them, and his quick step up the stairs, and his gay, glad greeting, as if they had parted but yesterday.

When Mrs. King had discreetly left the father and daughter alone, Mr. Yorke observed interrogatively, after a few moments' silence, cracking a nut and dipping the kernel in a glass of sherry meanwhile.

"So you and Felix didn't hit it off after all, little girl?"

"No," admitted Calla, blushing crimson, and her breath coming shorter than usual, so that it was in rather broken accents she con-

tinued—"But there is not, never was anything—any disagreement to prevent our being the best of friends." And to speak with her own lips of Felix and herself being "friends," shot a sharp pain of memory and contrast through her heart even now. "And, papa, there is something else I have to say to you," she added, hurrying away from the subject of Felix; and escaping that topic, her voice rose to a lighter tone. "There is somebody else who appears to have the peculiar taste to—to think, to want——" A nervous, uncertain smile hovered round her lips.

"To want my little girl, eh? Aha! so *that's* the story, is it? Another fellow cut in, and you threw Felix over, eh?"

"No, no, *no!*" asseverated Calla vehemently and earnestly, the smile fading away. "It was *after*, long after, Felix and I had said good-bye—it was a year after; and he is—you have heard of him—heard us talk of him, surely, long ago? It is Felix's friend, Julius Lusada."

"Lusada!" Easy-going Tom Yorke looked surprised and interested for once. "Lusada! Whew!—yes, I've heard of him: this Lusada's a pretty well-known character in a rather rough set I mixed in out West. Filibustered in Nicaragua—one of the Vigilance Committee in '56—went gold-digging in Australia—yes, I remember. Fine fellow, I believe, popularly supposed to have made a pot of money out of raising a sunken Spanish galleon. We believe as much of that as we like," he added parenthetically. "But I should not have thought he was a marrying man," he concluded, regarding his daughter as if appraising her attractions.

"Nor should I, until about a week ago," she responded, feeling quite at ease, now that the disclosure was made. "I want you to see him, papa."

"Papa" nodded, and repeated to himself reflectively,

"Lusada—h'm—well, why not? Better mate among the Bohemians than the Philistines. It is evidently written that I am not to keep my little girl at home," continued Tom Yorke (who never, save once in his life, for a few brief bright years, had had a home; and if he had had one, would not have stayed there) in tenderly regretful accents. "The young fellows will take care of that."

"But Julius Lusada is not a young fellow—not particularly young, that is. You will see him soon, papa, and can pronounce upon him from your own personal observation, for I told him—at least, he said—I wanted him to see you, you know, and so I dare say he will come to-morrow."

Julius Lusada did come on the morrow, on the lover's usual (and often dreaded) errand, to the father of his beloved; but the traditional *mauvais quart d'heure* between the suitor and the parent was between these two Bohemians considerably simplified and abbreviated.

A great deal was understood in a few words—there appeared to be some chemical affinity between the two natures, for they immediately amalgamated—they smoked the pipe of peace—only in this case it was a box of fine Havana cigars—together, and drank a bottle of champagne. Calla lit their matches and filled their glasses, and "all went merry as a marriage-bell."

In an introduction to the family of one's beloved, it is the interview with the father which looms up most alarmingly if that gaunt, threadbare giant yeleft Poverty, stalks between you and the lady of your love. But when there is no such grim obstacle, perhaps the making acquaintance for the first time with the female part of the family is the worst part of the ordeal. One is so conscious of the importance of a first impression, one has so uncomfortable a sense of being "on approval," of undergoing helplessly from hat-brim to boot-heel the merciless criticism of the feminine eyes that are so infinitely keener to detect a blemish than a beauty.

Julius Lusada had only Mrs. King to satisfy as to his general eligibility of appearance, manner, and character. He passed through the ordeal triumphantly, either through self-confidence in his own power to do so, or unconsciousness that he was undergoing any ordeal at all. He fairly dazzled Mrs. King, so that she felt incapable of forming any clear judgment of him. But when he was absent, and she tried to piece together her impressions of him, they were of decided admiration, of liking a trifle less decided, and of just that shade of doubt with which one would find a superb wild creature of the forest, superficially docile, but only half-tamed, introduced as a domestic inmate into one's home. She felt as if she had been dazzled by a flashing meteor, and doubted whether with all its brightness it would prove a desirable fire to warm the household hearth.

Calla perfectly comprehended her aunt's feelings; she laughed and kissed her, and tossed her pretty head securely, with a half defiant smile. She had no fear of her tame lion. By the keen instinct of her heart, rather than by any perceptiveness of her intellect, she knew that the man's rough and reckless life had not spoilt his nature, though the wild element that was a part of him, body and soul, could never be eliminated. Rash, obstinate, headstrong, carried away by mad caprices, he might be; fickle to some extent, possibly, but never false; despotic, but never stooping to petty tyrannies; generous and chivalrous always, with "blendings of the worst and best," perhaps, but with every capacity in him for loyalty through life and devotion unto death.

One thing only troubled Calla's peace now, one anxiety only fluttered her heart at every post-time. What would Felix say to this, her second choice? The news had reached him now—with what effect? Would he deem his friend disloyal for winning the

love that he had himself put away from him? Would he think her faithless?—would he say bitterly, “She never loved me?”

She could know no real tranquillity till this doubt was solved. She schooled herself to expect some sharp stab in the solution. She could bear any cold and cutting congratulation. She could bear any veiled reproach, even any satire. “I shall have *deserved* it,” she would say to herself, with head held bravely up, as if to meet the charge, and the blood burning in her cheeks. But only one thing she felt she could not bear—let him think anything but that she never loved him!

The looked-for letter came to her at last. She had wondered whether he would write. She carried it up to her room, whither her aunt, mildly curious, but not especially anxious—for she knew nothing of the real story of the enforced parting between Felix and Calla—followed her soon.

Mrs. King entered, and stood aghast.

Calla was down on her knees on the floor at her own bedside, her head buried in her hands, her whole frame shaken with passionate, stifled sobs. When she lifted her face, all its beauty blurred and stained with a storm of tears, Mrs. King saw that she held the letter clasped and crushed in her hands.

“Calla, my darling child, what is it? The letter is from Felix, is it not? What can he say to agitate you so?”

The girl’s lips quivered, and she tried to form some word, but a rising sob stopped her speech.

“My dear, don’t, *don’t* distress yourself. Remember, darling, you are engaged to Julius Lusada now; it is the lot you chose for yourself. What can Felix say to cause you such emotion? It is not well, it is not fit, that you should allow any reproach of his to move you so. Think nothing of it; men are men; it is only natural he should feel some little bitterness, but——”

“Bitterness?—reproach?” cried Calla, her eyes flashing with a sort of radiance through their tears. “Felix bitter to *me*? Oh, auntie, it is not that—not that! Too good, too generous, too noble! What did I ever do to be worthy of his love?”

Her upturned face, as she knelt there with the letter clasped in her folded hands, and her head thrown back in a sort of mingled pride and passion was a revelation to Mrs. King. Those great dark tear-drowned eyes, with their rapt gaze of a delight that stabbed more keenly than pain; those lips that quivered in a smile more sadly passionate than a sigh—were these signs of the girlish fancy, the shallow caprice, that they had deemed Calla’s affection for Felix to be?

“I had rather you did not read the letter, dear,” the girl said more calmly, after a silence which Mrs. King had spent in anxious watchfulness. “But I will tell you all that can interest you in it.”

"No, do not agitate yourself further, dear. I see, I see. You are a nature, Calla, always to be deeper stung by generosity than by reproach. But Felix never meant to sting you—never meant you to fret yourself like this."

"No, never, never," said Calla, and bent her head and pressed her lips on the letter she held.

"Calla," said her aunt earnestly, "you perplex me; you pain me. You must not think so much of Felix now. If you really loved him, why, child, in Heaven's name—*why* did you part from him, and place yourself out of his reach for ever by engaging yourself to his friend?"

"Let the past rest, dear auntie. What's done is done. Think me capricious—think me shallow and changeful, if you like. I daresay I seem so to you. My future is as bright a one as ever dawned upon a woman. Let my past alone. I shall grow further and further away from it month by month and year by year."

CHAPTER XXI.

"LOVE VICTORIOUS CROWNED AT LAST."

THE London season is rapidly waxing to its full moon. The whirlpool of London society is eddying fast and furious. Natives and visitors, residents and birds of passage, all are sucked into the vortex, and whirling round and round in their different circles. The current is irresistible; you may get dizzy sometimes, but once in the Charybdis, round you must go with the wave.

The Yorkes are whirling with the rest of the world. As soon as it became known that they had returned from their respective exiles in France, Scotland, and America (all places beyond the sacred sound of Bow bells seeming more or less exile to the eyes of the thoroughbred Londoner), and were living, a re-united, happy family in London again, their friends rallied round them with welcomes and visits and invitations. When it was known that Calla Yorke was again "engaged," all invitations included her *fiancé*; and when her *fiancé* was once fairly introduced, no gathering in all the circle of their acquaintance was deemed complete without him.

So now that the season has reached its full flood-tide, in that *clique* wherein the Yorkes chiefly move, and beyond which they seldom aspire, or descend, as the case might be, a new "lion" has made his appearance on the scene, and "roars him soft, not to affright the gentle ladies." Julius Lusada is this latest lion, and he is a popular one, and around his cage is generally assembled an

admiring group. Calla is secretly very proud of her handsome lover, and is an object of envy to most of the girls who have not caught and caged so splendid a captive.

Those who like her best say that "they make a beautiful couple"; those who like her least say that "she is very fortunate." The fact of her former brief engagement and its sudden rupture was, of course, well known; and maids and matrons of sentimental tendencies remark that she has not worn the willow very long, while others of more practical bent observe that she is doing much better for herself now. Some say that she never cared for Felix Grey; others that she is marrying Lusada for the sake of the money, of which, to judge by the style in which he lives, he appears to have so ample a supply.

The younger ladies in general agree that no girl who had free choice between the two men could choose otherwise than she has done; but some mothers of families ask curiously the question, which even the society that has installed him as its lion does not find satisfactorily answerable, "Who is he?"

The majority suppose that she quarrelled with Felix Grey about Lusada; but some opine that she has merely "looked higher" than poor Felix; most of them wind up with the quotation that "'Tis well to be off with the old love," &c. Some express a wonder as to how this second affair will end, and express their doubts as to long engagements. For although Tom Yorke is willing enough to bestow his blessing and his paternal sanction on the betrothal, he is not willing that the marriage should take place soon. He wants his Calla to be his own for a little time. He says pathetically that during all their lives he has had so little of the daughter, whom he has himself left in the care of others. And then although he likes Julius Lusada, he has a glimmering of something nearer resembling caution than any feeling Tom Yorke is in the habit of experiencing, and wants to know the man a little better before he intrusts his daughter's whole future to him.

Meanwhile, the season goes on, and no cloud dims the sky. Calla is as gay as a bird in summer, invariably votes for the acceptance of all the invitations that pour in, and keeps up her reputation as a reigning belle of the circle all the more successfully now that she leads about with her such a captive as Julius Lusada to prove the power of her charms:

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen," not at all because there are no passers-by along the path where it blooms, but because there are none to stop and point it out. Let one leader of taste single it forth for praise, and the reputation of the blossom is made. In every other line of life man or woman must work to make their own name, to win their own laurel wreath. The crown of beauty is set on her brow without effort of her own, by the

world's caprice, by a poet's passing fancy, a painter's casual criticism. A couple of portraits, one realistic, the other idealized, a sonnet by a well-known writer, of which the secret of the unknown inspiration has oozed out, half-a-dozen words uttered by the highest critic of female charms to whose authority the circle bow—these made Calla Yorke a beauty, and her beauty helps to float her talent. Her ventures into the perilous land of poetry, and her studies on the safer ground of prose, always pronounced full of promise, are considered to be ripening very near to fulfilment now. They are full, indeed, of the latent force of a nature more passionate than imaginative—an intelligence more broad and sympathetic than lofty. Just now, however, she has dropped her writing entirely; art is driven out of the field by love; she rests on the laurels of future possibilities in literature, and present achievements in social success.

As to her lover—"the handsome brigand," or "the picturesque pirate," as he is generally called--the question is everywhere, "Do you know Lusada?"

A brigand or a pirate is always irresistible in a drawing-room. The former might not be pleasant to encounter in a professional light, and in a land of defective police supervision. The latter is not a desirable captain to hail on the high seas. But in a drawing-room, how delightful a study for young ladies fresh from Byron -- how available and interesting a model for those in search of a "subject!"

Lusada was accredited with a far more lawless and adventurous life than he had really lived; a highly ornate and embellished biography of him, attributing to him heroisms he had never performed and sins he had never committed, became current in whispers and confidences, and did great honour to the inventive genius of whatever imagination first gave it form. So at every assembly this "picturesque pirate" shines, in happy unconsciousness that he is being regarded as a Robin Hood and a corsair rolled into one; and amongst the various parties, there comes one especially brilliant one, which Calla somehow remembers when memories of larger events have faded.

It is a fancy-dress ball, given by one who cannot be called "of the clique," but nevertheless all the clique are there, and many another circle within circle too. The rooms are large, and they are as full as they can hold, and over-brimming into balconies, and on to staircases. Representatives of many different circles form the component parts of the crowded whole. Bohemia and Belgravia meet and mingle in the moving mass of gorgeous dress and contrasted colours that make the general aspect of the room like a huge kaleidoscope.

Dresses are there so resplendent that they eclipse the wearer,

and absorb all attention away from her to her costume; dresses are there so tasteful that they direct admiring eyes to the wearer, who seems to reflect her beauty on the dress, and lend it all its charm by her grace in wearing it. At least, so the men think. The women know better. Amongst magnificent matrons in Pompadour brocades and court dresses of the time of the Stuarts, some girls in pure classic robes shine out conspicuously, and graceful little shepherdesses and flower-girls in white muslin lighten up the scene. There are several stage peasants clad in materials such as no peasants ever wore, and several more genuinely got-up peasants, on whom the silk-and-satin stage peasants rather look down.

The majority of the men are in various warlike garbs, as noble-men of various climes and periods, all agreeing in the one point of being provided with weapons of attack and defence. Some of them look very uncomfortable in their swords and spurs; others move as if to the manner born.

There is handsome Dick Dorvil, handsome as ever, in a resplendent costume all white satin and silver, with a white plume drooping over his golden curls. There is Will Tregarne, rather embarrassed by a long sword which keeps getting in his way; there is long-haired Harry Grafton as a troubadour, in white silk tights and a lute; and Treves got up as a stage villain, with his pink and white complexion stained, and his blonde eyebrows corked, with fiercely curled moustachios of swarthy hue, a slouch hat, long cloak, and an array of murderous weapons in his belt. The Godwyns are here, Lusada's friends of Godwyn Grange; Arnold Godwyn, the present head of the family; a sister who looks a few years older than himself, and a boyish brother. They dabble in art and literature in an amateur way; they have a kind of hankering to get behind the scenes, and have at present not the least idea of the timbers and trap-doors they will have to stumble over when they get there. There is a sort of fascination to them about the busy working world of art of which they know as yet so little. They are pleasant, cultivated, high-class people, just romantic and unworldly enough to be taken captive by Julius Lusada. They are as willing as he to lay stress on their "cousinship," although it is a distant one enough, as the Lucy Godwyn who married Lusada's grandfather belonged to a remote younger branch. However, the present Godwyns have fallen willing victims to the fascination of their Transatlantic cousin, who simply came, saw, and conquered, and they are exceedingly gracious to his *fiancée*.

Netta Tregarne is floating about in sea-green waves of *tulle*, with waterlilies and grass waving in her long light hair. She has not only arranged her own costume, but has had a great deal to do with the designing and arranging of Calla's; and as both are eminently satisfactory and successful, Netta feels a glow of artistic pride when

she glances at herself and Calla as they pass down the long room beside the many mirrors. Calla is supposed to be a Venetian lady for the nonce, and looks as perfect as if she had stepped out of a picture, in a costume most becoming to her pure brunette beauty, of white silk relieved with maroon velvet and silver tissue, every fold of which has been superintended by Netta's artistic eyes.

Julius Lusada is superb in his costume of Henry VIII. He had contemplated appearing as a brigand, but Calla had not approved. "It would be *too* life-like," she had said, shaking her head, half laughingly. He is big enough and fair enough and handsome enough for Bluff King Hal, and looks his best. Somebody—out of the circle—asks who that dramatic fellow is; somebody answers that if he is not an actor he ought to be, and adds appreciatively that "we haven't got many such figures on the stage now." Most people make a point of asking him, "Where are his six wives?" There is another Henry VIII. on the scene, with less breadth of shoulder and less regularity of feature, and his gold lace is not so broad, and altogether he feels painfully eclipsed. There are two Charles I.'s, also, and it is the study of all these rival monarchs not to figure in the same quadrille with their counterparts.

A Red Republican, in *bonnet rouge*, a Quakeress, and a pretty Esmeralda, with a jingling tambourine, who have all met Calla Yorke two or three seasons back, all come up to her now with the same form of speech—

"How do you do, Miss Yorke?—so glad to meet you again—have to congratulate you on your engagement," &c.

Calla, who hates congratulations, and, moreover, feels rather uncertain as to whether they are wishing her joy of the old love or the new, thanks them, and escapes from the subject as speedily as she can, though when the gipsy asks effusively, "And *which* is Mr. Lusada? What! that *handsome* Henry VIII.?" she feels reassured on one point.

There is a "question of the day" among Calla's friends this season as to which is the handsomest, Dick Dorvil or Julius Lusada. It is mooted this night with great interest, and to neophytes in the circle the question is plainly put and the answer attended with considerable interest. Netta Tregarne communicates to Calla with perfect frankness that according to the present division of opinion Lusada has a majority of two votes.

The principal topic of the evening is dress of course. Dress, dress, dress, from every point of view—from that of the economical mother, who has arrayed her three daughters for a five-pound note (and very pretty and becoming their simple white costumes are too!), from that of the heiress, who has just paid three hundred and fifty pounds for her costume, from the view of the artist and the view of the millionaire, and the view of the young man who has hired his

costume, and is not quite sure whether it fits him, and endeavours to believe that everybody's costume has some hitch or another in its fit. Literature, the drama, and the state of affairs on the Continent, which just then are getting entangled, are lightly skimmed in conversation, but nobody seems to be really interested in anything except in somebody else's costume.

"I am so glad I've found you," observes Calla, making her way up to her lover and slipping her hand through his arm confidentially. "Why didn't you come to my rescue before? That tiresome Fool has been barricading me in a corner, to talk Women's Rights to me."

"Well, he may have been a fool for his choice of a subject, but I don't see his folly in his choice of a listener," responds Lusada, looking down at his *fiancée* with appreciative eyes. "Why do you call the poor fellow by so severe an epithet?"

"He *is* a fool!" says Calla explanatorily—"motley, and two donkey's ears on; don't you see, Julius? Look, I've got him down on my programme," showing the inscription, "7, polka mazurka. Fool," "and he has got me inscribed as Signora Angiolina, but I've half a mind to deny my name to escape another dose of the Female Suffrage."

"You have got Godwyn down twice, I see," observes Lusada, inspecting her programme where, however, the initials "J.L." recur so often he need not grudge any other *too* appearances.

"Yes.. What is more than dancing twice with the brother, the sister has invited me to go and spend a few days at Godwyn Grange."

"I should think she had!" he responds, as if that was indeed a matter-of-course. "They are real pleased with you, I tell you. I want you to like Emily Godwyn, and get friends with her; she's a good, true, loyal lady--clear grit all through."

"Translate!" exclaims Calla gaily. "If you *will* talk Californian, you must give yourself the trouble of translation."

Calla is in her gayest spirits; and as the evening wears on, she floats up to the seventh heaven of enjoyment. Julius Lusada is by her side, and she is proud of him as he of her. She is young and lovely, and beloved, and delights in all things beautiful. To move amidst all this beauty and brilliance, herself in full accordance with it, one of the parts of it, has a potent charm for her. Her senses, always susceptible and easily stirred, respond to the music, revel in the brightness, and the colours, and the dazzling restless beauty of all the scene. Eyes, ears, heart, vanity, all are fully satisfied this night. Her impressive nature is borne away by a soft, seductive tide of pure enjoyment of the present; she has drifted far away from the rocky shore of memories and regrets. Tom Yorke, who is comfortably lounging about in a wig and gown, taking mental notes for a light gossip article for the "Herald of Morning," spend-

ing a goodly portion of his time in the refreshment-rooms where the champagne is "flowing free," and occasionally standing in the door of the dancing-room to watch his daughter—feels very proud of the tall, graceful, white figure, with silver veils fluttering down from the dark hair, and touches of rich tinted velvet relieving the white and silver. Calla is one of those unequal beauties who sometimes fairly startle those who know them best by their loveliness, and at other times scarcely rise above the level of ordinary prettiness.

This evening Lusada scarcely exaggerates in telling her she is simply perfection. Lusada never errs on the side of concealing his admiration from its object. If he does not utter it in plain words, he always expresses it as plainly in looks.

At supper Calla gets far more than her rightful share of attention. She is surrounded by three cavaliers; Lusada naturally, and of right, keeps on one side; Dick Dorvil, for old acquaintance sake, keeps on the other; Arnold Godwyn, on the strength of their future cousinship, distant as it is, and uplifted by the buoyancy of excellent champagne, hovers close around, and addresses her as "his fair cousin." After supper the fun grows fast and furious. Square dances are altogether abolished, and the musicians barely take breathing time between the successive waltzes and galops demanded by the untiring dancers. The warriors have most of them disposed their swords and sabres in corners; some of them have unbuckled the spurs from their unaccustomed feet for greater freedom in the dance. Minerva has hung up her helmet on a girandole, and Diana has disposed of her shield and quiver; Esmeralda is jingling her tambourine in time to the waltz, and Calla, out of breath with a long whirl, stops a few moments for breath, clinging to Lusada's arm.

Though the room is a trifle clearer than before supper, it is crowded still, and the people lining the walls, either resting or looking on, are generally two or three rows deep. Calla's quick ears catch a few words from a couple standing there who do not notice that these plighted lovers have paused close to them. The man is saying something about "better be fortunate than faithful;" the girl responds scornfully,

"Faithful! Dogs are faithful! Women are not dogs!"

Then the couple catch a glimpse of Calla standing near them, and are suddenly silent. But she had known they were speaking of her before this sudden pause of theirs tells her so.

The words, the reflection of a reproach (however unreasonable it be) that they convey, startle her for the moment, but they do not strike deep. They only bring a memory before her like one of those sudden waking visions that "come like shadows, so depart." She is generally so singularly sensitive to any such allusion. How is it that those overheard words touch her lightly as a dream now?

Is it because her heart for once is shaken by no struggle and no doubt, but pleads utterly and entirely "guilty" to the charge?

She looks up in Julius Lusada's face; they are standing just as they have paused from the waltz, for a brief rest, to draw breath, his arm still closely encircling her waist, her hand still on his shoulder. Her eyes are shining; her cheeks are flushed with a lovelier rose than ever artifice or stage-bloom can supply; one accidentally-loosened tress of her hair strays down, and is caught upon the gold lace bars that cross his breast; and the antique gold chain and locket, that he chose for her and gave to her, rise and fall softly on her bosom as the fluttering breath heaves to and fro.

He is splendid—splendid both in figure and face; every woman in the room must admit that, and own the charm of that strong, self-asserting manhood, with its full yet unexpressed consciousness of power. Those deep blue eyes of his, whose depths are sometimes difficult to read, and whose language, *when* they speak, is so plain, look always straight into Calla's heart. They are telling her now, "How beautiful you are! I love you!" plainer than words could speak. Her eyes sink down before his; and the long drooping necklace rises and falls more slowly, yet deeper than before.

They are off again into the circle of the dance, floating round and round in perfect accord, lightly as if they were borne up on air, harmoniously as if they were one creature, and as if the music were a part of their pulses' beat; they pause again, drawing back from the circle into an arched recess full of flowers, where a toy fountain gurgles and splashes. She is resting again breathlessly on his strong arm, alone for the moment among the flowers, while the changing ranks of the dancers circle past them as they stand.

He is looking down on her face, drinking in its beauty, seeking to read in its flushed brightness an answer to the question he asks.

"Sweet, are you happy?"

"Yes."

"You shine in this bright, gay world of yours—you love it, don't you?"

"I do. It *is* my world, you know, though I have lived a good deal out of it."

"Will it hurt you, love, to leave it behind for a wilder, grander life of larger scope in my great New World with me?"

"No," she answers softly, her eyes sinking away from his. "With you, for you, I can leave it."

"Darling," he responds, in his deep tender tone, with its half melancholy modulation, "I'll not tear you away in any hurry from this bright setting that frames you so well. My lily shall bloom in her own fair island-garden while she chooses."

"Ah," she whispers, nestling a shade nearer to his side, "*that* is not a day, not a day longer than it pleases *you*."

She is utterly under the spell of his influence at this hour; it is a sway which all the subtle surrounding influences of music and light and colour, and ripple of fountain, and fragrance of flowers, act in accordance with and intensify. She looks up at him with a sort of reckless abandonment and acknowledgment at last, with a flash of eloquence in her dark eyes; they glow with a living light in their midnight depths, as they seem suddenly to cast away all shyness and reserve, and catch the fire from his. And standing there with him alone in the soft and odorous shadow of the tropical-coloured blossoms and great rare fern-leaves, silently she says in her heart, with a passion that for once defies the past, and tramples on it,

"Yes, I *am* inconstant. I am faithless to the old love, and the new love has become all."

The night wears on to morning; it is all a dream of dazzle and rapture, an atmosphere of roses and champagne, and beauty, and light and love, a supreme triumph of the present hour over all past and future to Calla. It is a time of triumph and high satisfaction to Julius Lusada too, not so much because he himself has been, and knows he has been, a very decided "success," but because the girl he loves, and whose beauty this evening has taken even him by surprise, has been his, his own, and his only, openly and acknowledgedly his. He has had no rival in her thoughts, there is no disputed corner in her inmost heart this night.

The gaslight has "paled its ineffectual fire" before the broad blue light of day. All the eastern sky—as much as can be seen above and between the London chimney-tops—is bathed in a flood of lovely rose when the last string of cabs and carriages draw up opposite the door, and the last battalion of guests begin to drop slowly away. In the supper-room still a knot of men are talking politics. Somebody has arrived from the City in a hansom, being evidently minded that it is better to come in for the fag-end of a festivity than the beginning of a fray, and has brought the news fresh from the telegraph wires, that on very good authority a Continental war is pronounced to be imminent.

Half the party believe this, and half do not, and while they are debating whether it will prove a true or a false prophecy, the host is calling for fresh bottles of champagne, the sleepy waiters are hanging about in drowsy groups, the late arrival is picnicing off the bones of a turkey, the last blushing relics of a lobster salad, and a rickety Charlotte-Russe, which has tottered and tumbled all on one side. Meanwhile, mothers and daughters are waiting in halls and passages for the husbands and fathers who are waxing warm over the Franco-Prussian question, and entirely forgetting the sunrise as they cross swords in argument—metaphorically. The weapons they wield in their assumed characters are too blunt for purposes of combat. They argue in happy unconsciousness of

the incongruousness between some of their costumes and their sentiments. There is Frederick the Great of Prussia, representing republican France—a Roman tribune, and a patriot of '93, standing boldly up for Imperialism.

Possibly the popping of champagne-corks symbolizes to them the coming contest, possibly that sparkling beverage which flows so freely proves an inspiration—anyhow the little party seem supremely absorbed in their bloodless conflict, and oblivious of their attendant families.

"Oh! here you all are, just as I thought, observes Calla, entering the supper-room in search of her own property—"Imperialists, Royalists, and Republicans all at it, hammer and tongs. Now, papa, if you don't come, there will be a rehearsal of the war on a small scale between these four walls."

"You don't care about politics, Miss Yorke?" says Arnold Godwyn. "I believe you have lost all your patriotism since you have been engaged to 'our American cousin.'"

"No, indeed, I am as patriotic as ever, but the prospect of a grand crash on the Continent does not at present touch me so nearly as the fact that the cab is waiting," she answers lightly, and never dreaming that there was a day before her when she should look back and remember those light and careless words with an aching heart.

Tom Yorke and Julius Lusada make a move in deference to Calla's request, the other war-politicians drop away slowly after them one by one, and soon the daylight streams into deserted rooms, though the last knot of warriors are making a final stand in the hall.

A highly-amused policeman lingers near the gate, lapsing into an appreciative smile as each fresh masquerader appears on the otherwise deserted pavement, and looks about for his or her vehicle.

Calla cannot help smiling, too, as she is conscious that X 99 is taking note of her costume and herself with approbation. Then she gives a very sincere sigh as she turns to Julius Lusada.

"How cold the daylight makes everything look! I feel like Cinderella when the clock struck, and all her beautiful things melted away! Morning makes us all look like ghosts. Ah! well, it has been a happy, very happy night! I am so sorry it is over. Good-night, Julius—good-bye until to-morrow evening—no, it is *this* evening—till this evening, then, *au revoir*."

BOOK VII.

IN FAITH UNFAITHFUL.

“ Before our lives divide for ever,
While Time is with us and hands are free—

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour
To think of things that are well outworn ?
Of fruitless husk, and fugitive flower ?
The dream foredone and the deed foreborne ?
Though Joy be done with and Grief be vain,
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain ;
Earth is not spoilt for a single shower—
But the rain has ruined the ungrown corn.”

SWINBURNE.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ FROST OF AN HOUR—FRUITS OF A SEASON.

THE day after the ball Calla arose rather tired, and feeling, as usually happens, a little physical re-action from the exuberant enjoyment of the previous evening. The echo of the music had been ringing in her brain, the rhythm of the dance throbbing through her dreams all night. She arose regretfully to every-day life and every-day garb again, full of girlish anxiety to talk the past evening over with anybody or everybody. Having treated Mrs. King to a glowing description of the whole entertainment, and a catalogue of the costumes, she went out to pay a visit to Netta Tregarne, and enjoy a *réchauffé* of the ball in conversation with some of her fellow guests.

Returning from this visit, she found that Mr. Lusada had called and was in the drawing-room with her aunt. Now, as Mr. Lusada was expected to bestow his company on them that evening, and consequently had no especial inducement to call in the day-time, Calla, although glad to see him, felt half disappointed, thinking, “ He has come to say he cannot come to-night.” This, however, was not his errand.

“ I was hoping you would come back soon, for I’ve only a few minutes,” he said, with his usual soft and courteous deference of

voice and glad welcome to look to Calla. "As I have just been telling Mrs. King, I met Felix to-day. He's just back from Greece. He wouldn't come on here with me. He had business in the City."

Over Calla's bright vivacity fell an instant shade of constraint. The smile with which she had greeted him did not fade, but completely changed its character. The frank and natural girl became an actress immediately.

"Oh, really?" Why I am surprised. I had no idea he was expected in town," she observed, leisurely pulling off her gloves, and untying her scarf, her mind full of only one wish—an ardent wish that her good aunt had not been there. She did not mind Lusada's presence, but she did not want a *woman's* eyes to be upon her, lest they should detect the bound her heart had given, and its flutterings now like a captured bird.

"No, I too was surprised to hear Felix was in town," said Mrs. King.

"I come of a tribe that's never surprised," said Lusada, in his most placid accent. "Well, he couldn't come in with me now; but he said he'd look in this evening and see you all."

"Ah!—yes. That's nice. We shall all be at home," observed Calla, in the most placid accents also. She was conscious, and on her guard, and all she possessed of histrionic power—which was not much—she was putting forth now.

"I suppose you have had a delightful gossip with Netta, my dear?" said Mrs. King.

"Oh, yes, a delicious long chat—all about everything and everybody," replied Calla most gaily.

Then they talked about the Tregarnes and the last night's ball, and nothing more was said of Felix.

It had become a custom that Calla always accompanied Lusada into the inner hall for a few words at parting. She followed him as usual after he had said good-bye to her aunt.

"Am I to come to-night?" he asked softly, not at all significantly or with ulterior meaning, but quite as a matter-of-fact inquiry concerning her will and pleasure.

Calla liked this, and answered in tones that were all sweetness, genuine, and not assumed,

"Yes, *of course*. Come early—as early as you can."

"I will," he said, and smiled, and lifted her hand and kissed it—his usual daily farewell—and left her.

She stood at the window watching him out of sight with fixed abstracted eyes, that were scarcely conscious of seeing him. She understood Lusada's visit of preparation well; she understood Felix's "business in the City" too. She knew that not their own feelings, but hers, had been the predominant care in the minds of both, and that a look or a hint of hers was all that was needed to

give either of them their cue of conduct as regarded themselves and her. She smiled sadly, lovingly, but a deep sigh followed the smile.

She was uneasy all the day, longing to be alone, and yet shrinking from attracting attention by any unusual wish for solitude. She forced herself to keep up her usual calm, bright manner, in fact, not being a practised actress, rather overdid it by trying to seem calmer and brighter than usual. All the while her heart was beating fast and heavily, and as the evening drew near, fluttering faster and faster. How she wished its agitation would cease! but she could not force her heart to beat tranquilly, though she might school her voice, and call a smile to her lips. How long it seemed since the previous night! When she looked back to it, that brilliant evening seemed to lie half a world away.

Lusada was the first to make his appearance, and while he and Mrs. King and Mr. Yorke sat chatting, Calla now and then put in a few words, and tried to follow the conversation, while her heart—apart and in suspense—was waiting—watching. A quarter of an hour, half-an-hour, an hour passed. But such hours always seem like months, and Calla thinks it must be midnight.

Remarks are made casually, "Where's Felix?" and, "Rather late, isn't he?" Calla smiles, and begins to join more animatedly in the conversation, gets more and more lively by fits and starts. All the time her whole soul is in her ears, listening for the sound of the door-bell—for the well-remembered footstep. "Will he come?"

An hour and a quarter. An hour and a half. She is quite pale, and feels faint with suspense now. "If he does not come, how shall I ever get through the night until to-morrow?" is her thought.

At last there is a ring at the bell, a foot, *his* step, upon the stairs. She collects herself together, rebellious against the throbbing of the heart she cannot control, resolved that she will not start, she will not flush, she will not pale. But in spite of these brave resolves her colour fades, her very lips are almost white, as Felix Grey enters the room.

He responds heartily to Mr. Yorke's hearty welcome; he answers Mrs. King's kindly greeting; then he shakes hands with *her*, and says, "How are you, Calla?" and then observes to Lusada, "Well, old fellow!"

That is all. Her part has been an easy one; it has simply been to reply to his inquiry that she is quite well; and so the meeting passes over in the most commonplace and matter-of-fact way. And now that it is over, and now that he has come, she is relieved and tranquillized at once. All the pain of suspense, all the sickening, suppressed agitation, have melted away and dispersed like a cloud, have dissolved into the air and are no more. Her heart slackens

back to its ordinary pulsation; the natural colour returns to her lips and cheek, the natural look to her candid eyes, now that the ordeal of meeting has passed, and passed so lightly.

"Where are you putting up, my dear boy?" Tom Yorke inquires as paternally as if the once upon a-time plans were still in existence. *He* sees nothing at all uncomfortable in the situation. That "his little girl didn't hit it off with old Felix somehow," he is well aware; but he is not troubled by any doubts as to whether Felix may have any objection to seeing the prize carried off by some other fellow. They are both "right good fellows," and his daughter had a right to choose which she liked; and he never bothers himself with self-made difficulties of delicacy. Mrs. King's mind is not so thoroughly at ease. She recollects Calla's unaccountable burst of tears over her old lover's letter; she never has quite understood Calla's change, and watches her now with carefully and delicately concealed curiosity, of which scrutiny the girl feels nevertheless aware in every nerve, though it does not annoy her so much as she would have fancied it must. Felix's presence is somehow strengthening and soothing.

"I'm in my old quarters," Felix replies to Yorke's friendly inquiry, "in Clarence Street."

"Ah, the old place? We have all encamped there in turn, haven't we? I passed it by the other day. How are they all?"

"All that is left of them I find flourishing. Mrs. Smith's voice pervades the house very much in the old way, from garret to basement. The little dressmaker upstairs has become quite a feature in the establishment and set up a brass-plate on the door. The poor 'little Marchioness' is gone; and there's a big 'Marchioness,' who deserves the title on account of her imposing presence—a dragoonish young woman whom it seems incongruous to see with a brush and dust-pan."

"And Miss Howard?" inquires Mrs. King.

"She is a fixture there, I think. Our landlady gives but a bad account of her, poor soul."

"And old Mr. Fletcher?" says Calla, testing her capacity for joining in the conversation gaily and easily, and coming off quite triumphantly and successfully.

"Gone—higher!—not the way of all flesh, but he has had a rise in the world, and lives on a top flat in Pimlico. I have been there one day and have had everybody's history already."

"You were always installed as the old lady's confidant," says Mrs. King, smiling at the reminiscences.

Felix Grey is not a whit changed, unless it be that his smile, gentle and genial as ever, lights his face a shade more rarely. He is just the Felix of the old days, whose presence quietly and insensibly brightened up the lives of the lodgers in Clarence

Street, and who strolled along the sands at La Basse-Rive talking theories, and holding forth on his own views of life in general, to Calla, choosing his topics and airing his political and theological opinions as if she had not been a woman young and fair—until the sense of the bloom and the beauty of this ripening womanhood had stolen softly over him—he had dropped a good many of his doctrines then, when fraternity lost itself in love! Yes, he was the same old Felix, unchanged, as she looked on him now.

He and Tom Yorke and Julius Lusada have naturally a great deal to say; these three wanderers by land and sea have all their recent travels to discuss, from Egypt to Oregon. Calla and Mrs. King sit quiet and listen with interest, and occasionally offer a light, if a cigar in the warmth of discussion extinguishes itself, or replenish the wine glasses when their contents get low.

Some difficulties are in direct opposition to the ordinary laws of perspective; they diminish as they near.

There is nothing more common and frequent than to see a situation, that looked from a distance the acme of awkwardness and embarrassment, passed off with absolute ease; there is nothing more rare than to be able to realize beforehand the facility with which the difficulty that looks in the future so insurmountable will accommodate itself to the present.

Calla could not have believed that she could lounge so leisurely in her chair, calm not only in appearance, but in reality, no flush nor paleness now altering her cheek, no nervous quivering of her sensitive lips, smiling freely and frankly, between the old love and the new.

She is surprised at her own tranquillity; she cannot comprehend herself, she whose heart an hour ago was fluttering so rebelliously in her breast. It is like a dream to her to see Felix Grey and Julius Lusada together. It is neither a pleasure nor a pain, but strange and dream-like. They are solid flesh and blood, both of them, no doubt. Ghosts are not as a rule in the habit of tossing off full bumpers; and the occasional creak and tremor of the table bears witness to the materiality of the emphatic hands that in the heat of argument or narration come down upon it. There is nothing at all visionary or ghostly about them save that their being seen through curling clouds of smoke now and then obscures the outline of their features. But to see them together is so unreal to Calla that she keeps fancying she shall awake as from a dream.

What a contrast they are!—the one pale, sparsely made, with no claim of beauty, with the thoughtful eyes that have now (or is it only Calla's fancy?) a sadder, dreamier look; the other a type of splendid manhood. Yet the undefinable hall-mark of gentle birth and breeding that is on Felix Grey is not upon Lusada; but he does not need it. The bluest of *sang azur*, filtered through twenty

generations, could not distinguish its owner more than this man is distinguished by his look and bearing. He carries himself with the conscious strength and pride of one who stands alone—who can afford to stand alone. It is the pride of strength, of a nature that “fear nor falsehood never knew,” and to such a nature the open consciousness of power may be forgiven.

Of the warm friendship existing between the two men, now, as ever, utterly unchanged by any intervening circumstances, there is no room for doubt. Felix admires Lusada sincerely, appreciates ungrudgingly Lusada's gifts of person and presence, so superior to his own, is his staunch and loyal ally in a friendship more level and equal than would seem on the surface easy to maintain with a man of Lusada's nature, powerful, self-asserting, and prone to lead. But Julius Lusada thoroughly reciprocates Felix's respect and admiration. He recognizes the quiet, unexpressed strength of a nature whose will is as strong and resolute as his own, and he holds that he would be scarcely more safe in founding his faith upon a rock than in trusting Felix Grey.

The evening passes over Calla far more like a dream than reality, until the hour of breaking up arrives. Then she wakes to reality, and with that reality to sore regret and pain, and craving longing. He is going; in a few minutes he will be gone from them; and she has scarcely spoken twenty words to him—has not exchanged one syllable of confidence, of memory, even of assurance of friendship. He has said his stay in London is uncertain, probably will not be long; and now he is saying good-night, is going—going without having had one moment's conversation aside or personally with her—going without one look of the old familiar friendship—going without a promise to come again soon.

She cannot bear this; she summons up courage suddenly, and advances to the charge. Are they not *friends*?—must they not be always friends?—why should she shrink so shyly and timorously from inviting an old friend? So she speaks out bravely and clearly,

“Come again soon and see us, Felix. We are almost always at home, some of us. We have not talked half our talk out to-night. You are to drop in again for another chat soon, mind. We shall expect you.”

“I'll call and take my chance of finding you at home, then. Good-night, Calla. You are looking well,” and he regards her with just that amount of attention which an old friend is privileged to bestow—no more than that—nay, scarcely so much. “Good-night, old boy,” he continues, holding out his hand to Lusada.

“I'm coming with you, my dear fellow; we go the same way,” Lusada responds. And thus, in the circle of general “good-nights,” there are no special and particular leave-takings, and the two friends go off together like true and trusty comrades as they are.

Calla sat thinking, pondering, long and silently that night before she slept. She tried to wind off smooth the tangled skein of her own feelings and tried in vain. The end of her perplexed reflections, the thoughts last in her mind, the words she last murmured to herself before she thrust thought away from her, and laid a tired head down on her pillow, were—

"Love—what is love? There can be no such thing as what we call 'true love' in the world. True love can love but one, they say. Then either there is no such thing as this 'true love,' or else—which do I love? Love, solve the mystery, for *I* cannot!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"DUST ARE OUR FRAMES, AND GILDED DUST OUR PRIDE."

IF there was a question as to whether the old love or the new stood first with Calla, no doubt as to *which* she loved, or *how* she loved, there was no doubt at all as to the anxiety with which she looked for Felix to come again.

All the next day, and all the next, she waited for him, and grew pale with the eagerness of waiting, and the unceasing effort with which she disguised that eagerness. She looked back enviously and regretfully to the peace and pleasure she had enjoyed so lately. She thought of the passionate delight with which she had flung herself into the present, and defied the past, only two nights before.

"I triumphed just a little before I was out of the wood, I'm afraid," she said to herself, with a sad little smile.

She longed for Felix to come; she craved to see him now with all the old gnawing craving that had slept for a long time. To see him—only to see him! Not to speak of love; not to forget how absolutely they were parted; not to dream even for a moment that they two could ever be lovers again. Only to see him, to meet in the old calm, tender friendship they had met in before the days of their love!—only to recall those days of friendship now! Even if they were but to meet for once, if their friendly words were but to be a farewell, she felt she must see Felix again. But in her heart, though it was so full of thoughts of Felix, Lusada was not lost sight of nor forgotten. She saw *him* on these days that she looked for Felix, and when he was with her the longing to see and speak to that other man did not die, but slumbered for a time. Julius Lusada's manner to his betrothed had never been more tender and full of knightly chivalry and the noble deference of the stronger to the weaker than just at this time.

This is not lost upon her; she is all softness and sweetness to

him, and Calla's softness is never assumed, her sweetness never false. She may act occasionally, act coldness and indifference when her woman's pride and caution are in arms. But she never profanes affection by acting or imitating it; her tones of love ring true; and Lusada knows this, and has no mistrust of her, whether he reads her heart quite clearly or not. Felix's name is never mentioned between them save in some casual and commonplace allusion. "Felix and I dined with Godwyn at the Social Club last night," or "I met Felix going into his publisher's to-day with a portentous-looking roll of manuscript under his arm."

If, however, Lusada takes Felix's return with perfect equanimity, it is a great deal more than he is expected to do by his London friends of this season. He and Calla would be amused if they could know with what interest their affairs are canvassed, and what entirely new lights are shed upon their mutual feelings. Felix Grey's coming back to London had been so unexpected that the first intimation thereof to the majority of his friends is his appearance among them in person.

It is one of the open evenings at the studio Tregarne's, which among its *habitués* is so frequently spoken of as simply "the studio," that an outsider might be led to imagine there was no other existing department of that class). The studio general is more or less open "all night long and every day" literally, especially during the midmost hours of the night; but this is one of the evenings on which it is a publicly understood thing that everybody will be welcome, whereas on other evenings everybody merely feels a tacit and comfortable confidence in the hospitality of the home in which, having once set foot, you feel, somehow, a kind of vested share thenceforth.

There are several old members of the circle gathered to-night, and a good many new ones. There is a sub-editor who really wields the thunders which are supposed to be called down by his principal, and to whom a callow poet, who has just had a small octavo volume published "for private distribution," is devoting himself; there is an American special correspondent taking notes on London society, which occupation he finds alike lucrative, and a pleasant and congenial one, especially as it is enlivened by a flirtation with the vivacious Miss Hunter, who, being made aware of his line in life, is amusing herself by enlightening him on British customs in a manner calculated to astonish her own compatriots far more than his.

There is "Flower Dorvil," with a camellia in his coat, not a rung higher up the ladder of Fame than he was when we knew him first—"too well off and too good-looking ever to be anything but a drone!"--so say the working bees who do not share the disadvantages of wealth and beauty.

There is Graham, meekest of men and sternest of critics, honey on his lips and gall at the tip of his pen, differentially devoted to a fair and graceful, modest and Madonna-eyed lady whom everybody present knows—but whom the world in general does *not* know—to be the authoress of one of the most startling heterodox works of the age. There is Julius Lusada, perfectly at home there as elsewhere, occupying two chairs at once as only one to the manner born and bred can do; and there is Arnold Godwyn, very happy in feeling himself really behind the scenes.

As these are not supposed to be ladies' evenings, although there are not a few of the fairer sex present (who are all able and willing to "stand smoke"), the gentlemen are all smoking and looking serenely happy, "as only smokers can," when Felix Grey walks in. While he is greeted by exclamations in various keys of surprise and welcome, those few who knew him and Calla *en intime* repress one and all a desire to turn and watch the meeting between him and Lusada. Netta Tregarne particularly, who retains a surprising amount of romance and simplicity still, steps between them with almost as nervous a blush as if they had been rivals in the field of her own affections, while Miss Hunter whispers to her special correspondent eagerly,

"Tell me, quick—do your compatriots carry six-shooters in their pockets and use them on small provocation?"

They note with some relief and more surprise that the rivals hail each other with an unmistakably hearty greeting, clasp hands in the most cordial way, have evidently only parted within the last few hours, and regard this meeting as an agreeably anticipated incident.

The common play of "the old love and the new," that play which at some time or another passes on almost every stage, which is sometimes so light a burlesque, and sometimes so dark a tragedy, and occasionally begins as the one, and just, ere the curtain's fall, shifts startlingly into the other, has been enacted over and over again in this circle. It is nothing so new to them as to inspire them with any especial curiosity, but that now one of the actors on the scene is new to them, and thus lends a new interest to the old, old play. Moreover, they have one and all conceived an erroneous and one-sided view of Lusada, and look upon him as a nineteenth-century incarnation of Othello and the Giaour, a delightful friend, but a most undesirable rival. Nor has the fact of Felix Grey's being an old friend and comrade of his held a very prominent place in their minds, for as a rule with unnecessary delicacy and caution they have avoided talking much of Felix before him.

His compatriot, the newspaper correspondent, is meanwhile regarding Lusada as decidedly an acquisition to the evening; looking on him with a professional eye, and having received from Miss Hunter

a brief synopsis of the current version of his biography, he decides that the subject of it will work in very well into his next week's letter.

"I would put it under the head of 'The Brigand Leader in the British Drawing-room,' if I were you," the young lady suggests confidentially, with mischief in her eyes; "and could you not get in something touching about the proud plumes of the American Eagle being smoothed by the velvet paw of the British Lion? He is very popular among us—in fact, I believe he is going to marry one of us."

"Which one, may I inquire?"

"You may inquire; but if you mean to make a note of it for publication, why, you'll inquire of me in vain."

"But if I do not inquire for that purpose?" he rejoins gravely.

"Then if you only ask from personal curiosity, why, I'll tell you. First of all, it's not *me*. It is one of our gallery beauties—the original of that portrait—the middle one there."

Miss Hunter's interest suddenly wanders from her correspondent, as she perceives Felix Grey and Julius Lusada side by side, contemplating the life-size portrait of Calla, which occupies a prominent place in the aforesaid "gallery of beauties."

"You recognize that?" observes Lusada, drawing Arnold Godwyn's attention to it. Mr. Godwyn does indeed recognize it—thinks it charming.

"The eyes are certainly wonderfully like," remarks Felix.

"You know Miss Yorke?" inquires Godwyn conversationally.

"Yes, I have known all the family for many years."

Miss Hunter, catching this fragment of conversation, and determined that if there is anything interesting going on, she will be in it, deserts her cavalier abruptly, and joins the picture-gazing group, and begins,

"You remember when that was being painted, Mr. Grey?"

"Perfectly—it was when I last came back from America."

"It has seized her expression well, hasn't it?" says Lusada.

"Yes—there is a good deal of latent force about it, with all its feminine grace," rejoins Mr. Godwyn.

"She looks very girlish there, she has altered a good deal, but I think it's for the better. So much more depth and thought in her face," Miss Hunter observes, with some admiration, but more calm criticism, she being a young lady who so invariably speaks her mind that she has long ere now forgotten whether to consider if the frank unfolding of her mind will be agreeable to her listeners.

"She has altered," admits Felix slowly, looking with unconscious earnestness on the picture of the girl whose smile is very sunshine, whose face radiates the living light of a fresh, cloudless, careless youth. Will Tregarne may well regard this portrait as one of his masterpieces. He has seized in her fearless eyes and frank smile

the very incarnation of youth and hope and joy. "She has altered," says Felix.

"Has she?" rejoins Lusada, glancing at him with a sort of quick, keen inquiry. Then he too bends a long, earnest look on the picture, and observes, half to himself and half to Felix,

"If she has, it's just such a change—and only such a change—as in Undine after the soul was breathed into her."

Miss Hunter is not meant to hear these aside-spoken words, but her quick ear catches them, and her free and ready tongue reports them afterwards to Netta Tregarne.

"Yes," Netta responds thoughtfully, "that's true enough. I have noticed just that change in Calla myself. But I wonder—at *whose* call was it that the soul awoke?"

Arnold Godwyn, being there on Lusada's introduction as Lusada's friend, leaves when he leaves, and knows never a word of any possible past, present, or future rivalry between Felix Grey and Julius Lusada. He thinks Grey a charming fellow, and having lately enjoyed one of his books, is delighted to know the author.

So it happens one day soon, that Lusada's information to his betrothed is,

"Arnold Godwyn has asked Felix down to the Grange; I guess he'll be going next week."

"Next week?" rejoins Calla, quickly and inquiringly; for it is "next week" that Miss Godwyn has named in her invitation to Mr. and Miss Yorke to spend a few days at the Grange, Julius Lusada, of course, being of the party.

"Yes, he can get away from London on the Saturday evening, and stop at Godwyn's till Monday. We'll be there then, you know," he remarks easily, but half interrogatively—as if it were in the least degree necessary to remind her of the fact so prominent in her mind!

"Yes," she assents, with mild indifference.

He looks at her for a moment half hesitatingly, but quite frankly and trustfully, and then says,

"It's all the same to you, my little lady, isn't it?—you don't mind?"

"Mind? Not the least in the world!" she assured him, earnestly and simply, only changing colour a little; and she raised her eyes to meet his freely.

Those deep clear eyes of hers might move even the stoutest sceptic in woman's truth to relent—if only for a moment—into the faith of Pericles,

"Falseness cannot dwell in thee."

As to Lusada, although he has uttered misogynist sentiments in his day, and when the mood moves him (which is not often, for his normal frame of mind and body is healthy and robust), can occa-

sionally pose in a Byronic attitude of general distrust in the truth of womankind, yet somehow no shadow of that distrust has ever crossed his mind concerning this one girl. She is conscious of this: she observes with a sort of tender and half-puzzled wonder that this man, who has lived through twenty histories in his span of existence—and half the records of whose erratic and tempestuous life are sealed books to her—holds in her a trust as transparent and simple and absolute as that of a boy in his first fresh dream of romance. She smiles as she twines her fingers lightly in her tame lion's tawny mane, and feels a delicious sense of security in her influence over him—an influence which nevertheless is by no means empire. The chains which bind her to him would not hold her so fast and firm did she not recognize in him a master-spirit. No Cleopatra would ever hold such full supremacy over the heart of *this* Antony as that

"His sword, made weak by his affection, would
Obey it on all cause."

He will be her head, her lord, and her leader most literally, possibly in coming days somewhat her tyrant too, for the despotic nature will assert itself in the fondest love when once pursuit has given way to possession. But he will never wound her with a doubt nor insult her with a suspicion.

So on the appointed day, in perfect peace and comfort, Lusada accompanies his *fiancée* and her father down to Godwyn Grange.

This, the home of past and present Godwyns, is a grand and grey old seventeenth-century house, lying in the midst of its own broad undulating lands of sloping sward and scattered trees. There is not so much timber on the Godwyn estate as there was a couple of generations back, but there is still enough to perfect the picture of the old Grange standing grand and solitary in the midst of its own grounds: and the mortgage under which a part of that beautiful park land lies is not a visible fact that affects the landscape at all. The east wing of the house has been rebuilt in modern days; but the present Godwyns have had the ivy trained so thickly over it, and its frontage so altered and thrown forward to correspond with the west wing, that only the gables disclose the difference of age.

It is one of the hundreds of old family mansions that look haunted with histories, as if in the silence of night the very walls could whisper strange stories. In point of fact, Godwyn Grange *has* a good many histories, from that of the two brothers who enlisted under the opposite banners and both fought and fell at Marston Moor, to a more modern story which the family are not so fond of telling.

Calla was charmed with the old mansion, from the moment that she crossed its threshold, and stood in the great, dim, shadowy hall, with bars of coloured light from the high, narrow, stained-glass

windows falling across the dark oak floor, with heavy time-blackened panelling and faded frescoes on the walls, and a huge massive staircase with carved balustrades that took up half the width of the back of the hall, and cast the dining- and drawing-room doors into deep shade and comparative insignificance.

It was something new to Calla—all the life at Godwyn. She enjoyed the atmosphere of wealth and comfort and quiet, for the present Godwyns were not numbered among those prudent ones who prepare for a possible distant failing in their fortunes by a gradual and cautious reduction beforehand. They would live in their old accustomed style to the last, and if the time ever came that they must fall, they would fall at once from the full height, having drained the cup to the last drop.

They were a somewhat mixed party at the Grange this week. Besides the head of the family, Arnold Godwyn, his elder sister and younger brother, and Mrs. George Godwyn, their widowed aunt—a gentle, shadowy, undemonstrative kind of woman, who glided through life without seeming to set any mark upon it—there were the Bertrams, a little man who was cleverer than he looked, and had travelled half round the world, with a tall, pale, graceful bride, who wrote poetry, and set her own songs to music, and sang them, and had the reputation of being cleverer than she really was; there were the Egertons, a perfectly characterless and nondescript couple, of the purest of *sang azur*, however; and there was Miss Wroughton, a heiress, plain of features, soberly splendid of attire, quick of wit, and, sooth to say, a little sharp of tongue.

The first and the last of these guests had been selected as being suitable and congenial acquaintances for Lasada and his *fiancée*; the Egertons, older friends, had been thrown in for old acquaintance sake to make up the party. The Godwyns themselves found more congenial spirits in their new friends than in their old. They all liked anything out of the common way, worshipped at the shrine of the picturesque, and cherished a special weakness for art and literature.

Was not the drawing-room table ornamented with a gorgeously bound and gilt and elaborately illustrated volume of verse, published by Arnold Godwyn before he was five-and-twenty?—and were not the walls hung round with water-colour landscapes washed in by his sister Emily? They had just the amount of talent that goes a long way in the circle where it reigns alone, but is scarcely strong enough to battle in the crowded lists of the world, where the blows ring so sharply on the stoutest shield.

At Godwyn Grange now, among the little party collected there, Julius Lasada was certainly the conspicuous and central figure—a picture dashed in with broader touches and brighter colours, if cruder and less highly finished, than those around. He moved

among them like the embodiment of the unruly exuberance of strength, the untamed force, of the great New World of the Far West—he was as the outcome and product of a chaos of conflicting powers broken free, of the cauldron where struggling forces seethe and bubble, from which tempestuous travail may yet rise a future as glorious as any born of earth. From such clash and conflict there fly up ever and anon sparks of pure human force as if to prophesy the power that shall be.

Faulty and real and human, with no touch of spirituality or transcendentalism about him, Lusada, fresh from a wild and lawless life in lands yet only half reclaimed from barbarism (he had always fled from cities to the backwoods and the prairie), stood now in the Old World, in a home hallowed by historic association, where generations of pure descent had lived and died, tradition clinging about its walls, reverence for the Past breathing in its very air—stood proud and strong in his uncultured native power, unabashed by this close contact with a life of which luxury and refinement were not only the graces, but the natural elements, conscious and confident in the genius of that force which makes the Chief wherever the Cause shall call, that force which we cannot degrade by entitling it merely physical, yet far too fully charged with bare personal magnetism to be called purely spiritual or intellectual.

Looking at him as he moves among the rest, Calla feels proud of her lover, and her quick feminine instinct detects with some amusement the aspect in which Mrs. Egerton and Mrs. Bertram view him—as a remarkable specimen of a rare, and, indeed, hitherto unknown species, not unattractive, but probably dangerous, and certainly to be studied from a distance with care and caution.

“Are *all* Californians like that?” inquires Mrs. Bertram languidly, lightly waving her fan in his direction, he being at a safe distance.

“If they are,” says Miss Wroughton briskly—she is a young lady with an eye for the picturesque—“I shall spend my next season in San Francisco.”

“Don’t take your Transatlantic ticket under that delusion, Miss Wroughton,” says Mr. Bertram. “You are almost as likely to find a man like that in the Old World as in the New. It is Individuality, not Nationality, that makes him what he is, if I may judge by my slight acquaintance with him and his country, where once I spent some weeks.”

“Scarcely long to exhaust the list of national and individual types from North to South, and East to West, I should fancy,” responds the young lady.

“I did not take you through the gallery yesterday, I think, Miss Yorke?” Miss Godwyn is observing to Calla. “Would you like to look at the pictures now?”

"Very much," Calla replies promptly, and rises to follow her hostess. Lusada follows too—not but what he has long ago looked at every picture in the gallery. Robert Godwyn comes also, to assist his sister in doing the *cicerone*, and to have as much as possible of the company of Lusada, for whom he entertains a boyish hero-worship, and of Calla, whom, she being some years older than himself, he is, of course, rapidly installing on the pedestal of his youthful fancy, which has now been vacant nearly five weeks.

The collection of pictures at Godwyn Grange is worth looking at, although it comprises no especial rarities. In the neighbourhood it is considered the thing to be seen, and the Godwyns are proud of it, and justifiably so, for there certainly is not such a collection for many miles around. There is one of Turner's early landscapes, a delicious warm bit of autumn woodland, and a group of cattle by Morland; hard by these hangs a soft bronze-eyed southern beauty of Murillo's; then there is a Gainsborough, and a large, fair, calm woman, with the placid "ox-eyes" of a Juno, concerning which there is some doubt as to whether it is or is not a genuine Rubens. There are acknowledged copies of masterpieces, which in the eyes of Lusada and Calla are just as satisfactory to contemplate as the originals, although she at least has the worldly wisdom to conceal this fact. Last, not least, there are the family portraits, from the time of the first Stuarts down to the present generation.

Emily Godwyn, with her soft, quiet presence, her brown braided hair, her simple rich morning dress of some Quaker-coloured stuff, points out one after one of her ancestors and ancestresses, giving names, dates, and scraps of anecdote in her gentle, measured voice in a matter-of-fact way, standing calm and almost indifferent amongst these shadows of the dead whose blood runs in her veins to-day, who perhaps in their living strength stood on this spot just as she stands now this very day, this very hour, a century and more ago. Calla, who is unconscious of possessing ancestors, is far more impressed by this assembly of family portraits than is the descendant of this long roll of the departed. Young Robert Godwyn also lounges along perfectly coolly, and takes a good deal more interest in the visitors to whom he is assisting to exhibit the family glories than in the exhibition.

"I know all the old fellows by heart by this time," he observes. "To my mind, there's only one of them really worth looking at—that's our beauty, Lady Alithea; she married my great-uncle."

Lady Alithea is a blonde beauty. With her golden hair and her great dreamy eyes, her attire all a soft harmony of fawn and brown, she smiles from the canvas in the immortal loveliness that Sir Joshua Reynolds has handed down to futurity. Most of the Godwyns are dark, only here and there fair locks and blue eyes shine out. Fair Lady Alithea's fame as the beauty is little assailed

by any rival ladies of Godwyn race. They do not appear, on the whole, to be a family distinguished for any extreme personal beauty, although, no doubt, the artists have done their best for them. The men, as a rule, have finer and stronger faces than the women, or else the salient characteristics of the masculine features have been more easily seized and had fuller justice done to them.

Here are the two brothers that fell at Marston Moor; one is a dark and handsome boy, with great black eyes in which, in some lights, you seem to catch the fire flash even now, with raven love-locks waving from under his cavalier hat, with jaunty cloak and sword-knot; the other is paler, older, fairer, sombre, and colourless, in his Puritan garb. At this Puritan brother Calla gazes with a half-perplexed attention.

"Somehow that face seems not altogether unfamiliar to me?" she observes slowly. "What is there about it that I recognize?" Then the answer flashes across her mind suddenly. "Why, surely," she says, "it is like Felix! Look, Julius, don't *you* see a reminiscence of Felix there?"

"Why, now you mention it, I fancy I do, but it never occurred to me to trace any resemblance before. Do you notice, Miss Emily, any reminiscence of my friend Felix Grey in this ancestor of yours?"

"Of Mr. Grey?" says the lady, doubtfully. "Well, really I cannot say I notice any likeness; but I am never good at tracing likenesses. When he comes we can compare him feature by feature with Clement Godwyn."

"It is not the features that are alike," observes Calla, still gazing into Clement Godwyn's calm, earnest face, and the deep and somewhat hollow eyes. "Except just the outline of the lower part of the face, the features are not at all similar; but the expression is wonderfully like Felix Grey's."

"Yes, I see it is, somehow," agrees Lusada easily and comfortably, turning a last casual glance towards the picture as he saunters on, and not deeming it a matter of the slightest significance.

"There is a wonderful likeness to our Puritan ancestor in the portrait of my uncle Percy," observes Miss Godwyn.

"About the only likeness there was between them, I should guess," suggests Robert with an irreverent smile.

"That's Percy Godwyn who was lost in the 'Calypso'?" says Lusada, as Miss Godwyn turns a slightly reproachful look towards her brother.

"Yes. I do not recollect him, of course, but I believe this portrait is very like."

"It is like, though of course he had altered a good deal when I saw him," observes Lusada.

"Ah, to be sure; I forgot that you two had met in your wanderings," rejoins Emily Godwyn.

"Met and parted, and only discovered our cousinship just before we drifted apart," remarks Lusada, whose memory is tenacious as to the fact of his distant connection with the Godwyns.

"This was taken just before he went abroad," the lady continues. "You see the likeness of feature to our Puritan ancestor, do you not, Miss Yorke?"

"Indeed a very strong likeness. And——" Calla checked herself suddenly; she had been about to add that she recognized again a vivid reminiscence of Felix, only an unaccountable shyness stopped her. Somehow she could not utter Felix's name then, when Miss Godwyn and Lusada both happened—by mere chance—to be looking full at her. She was not blushing, but she knew, by certain instinct, that if she spoke that name then, under their eyes, it would bring the blood in an instant burning red to her cheeks, and she would not risk this. Yet, although she said nothing, she was struck more than ever by the resemblance to Felix in this pictured face of Percy Godwyn, and she wondered that both the others did not also exclaim about it. But her eyes on this subject were keener, her interest warmer, than theirs.

In the tall and stalwart young figure of Percy Godwyn, pictured life-size and full length, with his arm flung over the neck of his favourite horse—in the dashing, careless, haughty grace of the attitude—in the black curling hair and the large light-blue eyes, contrasting with the darkness of that hair—there was no reminiscence of Felix to be traced. It was something in the firm curve of the lips, the mould of the chin and brow, something in the expression, too, although in Percy Godwyn's face, as the artist had seized and interpreted the expression, the earnestness, the tenacity, the resolution and thoughtfulness that characterized both the portrait of Clement Godwyn, and the face of Felix Grey, lay latent, and to some extent veiled and thrown into the background by the frank boldness of those bright young blue eyes, the half audacious, half cynical smile, on the firm lips barely shaded by the boyish moustache.

"It is a very fine face," observed Calla to her youthful admirer, Robert, as they lingered a few moments there, while Miss Godwyn and Lusada passed on to the portraits of the present generation.

"Isn't it just?" responded Robert emphatically. "I wish he'd lived in my day! He and I would have got on together, I know. He was our prodigal and wanderer, you see—my grandfather regarded him as degenerate, and I think Emily inclined to the same idea. But I look upon him as a brick. What fellow would stop mewed up here when he had a thorough good chance open to him of starting a free new life, with a new world before him? I say, Miss Yorke, that's *my* portrait that Emily is pointing out now. I shall cut it!"

So saying, the young gentleman retired modestly into the back-ground, while Miss Godwyn, assuming, with an amused smile, the air of a show-woman, as she noted her brother's withdrawal, began :

"Here you behold the youngest of the family, the budding hope of the race, on whom we build—but where has the original vanished?—just as I was about to seize the opportunity of inculcating a moral lesson!"

CHAPTER XXIV

"HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO KINDLY!"

It is Saturday evening; the dinner-bell is shortly expected to ring, and all the party at Godwyn Grange, both household guests, and guests from the outside world, have assembled in the drawing-room in readiness for the summons, except Miss Yorke. Miss Yorke, however, is not going to be late, she is already leisurely descending the broad oak steps of the great staircase, nor is there any reason for her tardiness beyond the attention she has been bestowing on a new kind of coronet in which she has arranged her hair.

She pauses in the hall, to cast a final glance over her shoulder at the train of her dress, and assure herself that it trails a proper number of inches behind her, also to wonder whether Felix is come. He is expected that evening to dinner, she knows. He will certainly be there, unless any unexpected circumstances have prevented him. She was only to turn the handle of the drawing-room door, and she will in all probability find herself face to face with him. There is not the slightest cause for embarrassment; the ordeal of her *first* meeting with him since the old days has passed, and passed over smoothly, without hitch or jar; none of the party here can have any knowledge of that brief season during which he and she were plighted lovers, so there can be no curious eyes bent on her now. Yet she pauses, hesitates even in the shadow of the arched door-way, wonders whether, mingled in the deadened hum of voices that murmur faintly through the thick oak panels she can catch any tone of his voice. At last she opens the door with an unusually quick, firm turn of the handle, and walks in, looking her loveliest and proudest, with her head held high, a light flush warming up her usually pale cheek, no drooping nor wavering in the brave bright eyes that rove slowly and steadily round the room and fix on Felix's face.

There are others standing between them; he is occupied in conversation, so that they cannot meet and speak at once. He bows

as he catches her eye, and she bends her head with a smile. Their eyes only meet for that moment, yet as he continues listening with apparent earnest attention to what Mr. Bertram is saying, his mind's eye has only scope for one image; his vision is filled still with that brief glimpse of Calla, splendid in the ripened bloom of her young, yet queenly, beauty, not fragile, not ethereal, proud, pure, and strong, an embodiment of fair and sweet healthy human loveliness. Just for the moment, seeing her in this bright bloom, he is conscious of only one wild wish—that there rolled a whole world of sea between him and this one woman whose face thus

“Seen, became a part of sight.”

Calla meanwhile glances round the room with a general smile, and passes on leisurely from group to group, pausing here and there for a word, a greeting.

Although there are some additional guests to night, the party that would have looked large elsewhere seemed like a scattered few lost in the great drawing-room of Godwyn Grange. Everything there is on a large scale—the broad couches and ottomans make the ladies sitting thereon look *petite* and diminutive, even though they are normally of majestic presence, and in the deep armchairs their occupants sink down and are lost to view. There are two clergymen added to the party to-night with their wives and daughters, and a stray bachelor or two. Not only thus is the party larger than usual, but livelier than usual. Every one is talking about the day's news—the declaration of war between France and Prussia; in every discussion this subject seems to be figuring, in one form or another. There is Mrs. Bertram, pale and poetic as usual, with lilies in her hair, carrying on a languid conversation with one of the new guests, in which it appears she thinks it must be so beautiful to be a nurse in an ambulance and tend the wounded. There is Tom Yorke paying devoted attention to one of the clergyman's daughters who happens to be pretty, as *ingénue* in book-muslin and curls, and who is enjoying the sweet incense of flattery, even though it is offered by a middle-aged man and a widower, and assumes the form of recognition of a congenial spirit, to whom he can pour forth in confidence his views on the war-question, secure in her intellectual appreciation and feminine sympathy. This view of herself is pleasing and new to the young lady, and she listens well pleased. There are Felix Grey and Mr. Bertram deep in conversation, on another branch general subject, and hard by there is Miss Wroughton, nothing much to look at in herself, but perfectly dressed in amber silk that suits her brunette complexion, and diamonds sparkling wherever jewels can be placed, from her chignon down to her shoe buckles. Lusada is at her side, bending his head down to the diamond butterfly that flashes

and quivers its wings from her hair. They too began with the day's news, but they have now fled from European to Transatlantic complications.

"We are discussing national characteristics. Miss Yorke," observes Miss Wroughton, as Calla draws near. "Mr. Lusada is conveying to us benighted islanders the humiliating conviction that in *his* country heroes are even as the sands upon the sea-shore."

"Mute inglorious Miltons and guiltless Cromwells, is that so?" says Calla gaily. "Well, never having been there, I can't say: but my suggestion would be—'Put not your trust in—patriots!'"

Felix, standing close by, turns at the sound of the clear, laughing voice, and holds out his hand in a common-place and casual greeting, and just for a second Calla's fingers rest lightly in his. Miss Wroughton does not dream that these two have ever been anything to each other, and although she draws Calla away from Felix in conversation with her and Lusada, it is not from the slightest suspicion of any possible awkwardness in the situation crossing her mind, but from a kindly desire to tacitly assure Miss Yorke, whom she supposes, being a young *fiancée*, is probably easily jealous, that *she*, Harriet Wroughton, with growing thousands lying idle in the funds, who has never yet failed to win a man on whom she chose to fix her attention, has no designs on Miss Yorke's property. Miss Wroughton does not underrate her own powers of attraction; indeed, she has found conquest so much too easy hitherto, that she somewhat undervalues its gratification. In the present case, though she finds something pleasantly novel about Julius Lusada, she has not the least intention of interfering with Calla's peace of mind, and wishes to make this evident.

At dinner, Felix's place is nearly opposite Calla. They have barely exchanged a word hitherto, and have no opportunity now. They drift apart into different currents of conversation: she is gay and lively, bandying bright repartee, and fencing with light laughter with Lusada and her other neighbour. Felix is engaged in a discussion on foreign and home politics—which in their present martial aspect are naturally now the centre of all interest, as none know how far the tide of war being once let loose may not flow—with Mr. Bertram and Arnold Godwyu, a discussion which gradually attracts the attention of those around and draws others into the field. By the time several courses have gone round, however, although this discussion holds possession of the whole table, nearly all save the host and Felix Grey are merely playing the rôle of attentive audience. Mr. Bertram and his supporters having temporarily retired from the field with silenced guns. Felix can talk well when he chooses, and eventually he becomes master of the field, not that he has by any means convinced or converted any of his adversaries, but he has had the best of the fight.

Calla watches him, listens to him, never joins in the argument by so much as a word, nor manifests even by a look or a smile approval or dissent; but he has no other such staunch ally following his standard in enthusiastic confidence as the girl opposite him who looks so cool and quiet and even uninterested. Lusada has scarcely been long enough in England, or studied the various European governments deeply enough to hold a post on the ground these discussions occupy: and where Julius Lusada cannot march forward in the confidence of conquering he never challenges the fight. He is of too haughty and dominant a nature to lightly risk defeat by striking spear on shield for an encounter in unknown lists with unaccustomed weapons.

So in this discussion Calla has only Felix to follow in silent and exclusive attention, only Felix's argument to echo and uphold in her heart, if not with her lips, only Felix's opinion to cherish as her own, nay, more tenaciously than her own, thenceforth, in as child-like a faith even now as in the departed days.

It seems wonderful that things can be so changed since then when *he* is so little altered. How often she has seen him look, heard him speak—when he was “wound up and set going” on some one of his favorite theories—exactly as he is looking and speaking this evening! There is something pleasant and restful in the atmosphere of that familiar presence—in the sound of the low, quiet tones, that with all their occasional softness of modulation, cut home with such deliberate incisive clearness at some points of the argument—in the sight of the firmly outlined thoughtful face, the earnest, steadfast eyes—eyes that can soften and flash and dream, *she* knows—but who else can know it here?

When from the diplomatic, retrospective, and national characteristic phases of politics, they move on to the military aspect of the campaign, then Julius Lusada comes to the front, and, as usual, sweeps all before him, not so much, perhaps, by clearness of logic or subtlety of argument as by a kind of infectious force and enthusiasm. There being no military men present, too, he has it all the more his own way. In generalship it is evident that he would play the boldest game, and his tactics would not be his forte. It would be less mission to lay out the far-reaching plan of the campaign, to map out the engineering works, to hold an inactive resistance against a long and tedious siege, than to lead the forlorn hope, to take the fort by storm, to dash down the Valley of Death right on the levelled guns, as in the immortal charge that was “Magnificent, but not war!”

In the evening the chiefly interesting topic seems to have exhausted itself, or it does not thrive in the sedative after-dinner atmosphere of the drawing-room, where there is a little music, a little chit-chat, a good deal of lounging lazily over photograph

albums and collections of dried flowers. Presently the majority of the gentlemen begin to drop away one by one to the billiard and smoking-rooms, leaving only one or two of rare chivalry to brighten up with their presence the matrons and the maids. Lusada and Felix are neither of them among this chivalrous minority. But Felix and Calla have had a few words together, a very few, although he has not appeared to avoid her, and she certainly has taken no pains to steer clear of him.

So he has politely opened a heavy album for her; they have laughed together at some passing jest, and exchanged a friendly word of good-night as he followed in Lusada's steps towards the smoking-room.

This kind of ordinary meeting and light, pleasant intercourse, without any scenes of agitation to mar it, is just what she had thought to herself she wished for. So now she had her wish. Yet that night as she lay awake and watched the faint silvery starlight strike in and glimmer on the panels of the window-frames and the odd deep shadows the night-lamp cast about the old-fashioned, long, low wainscoted room, and heard the owls booting from their nests in the ivy outside, she tossed about on her pillow restlessly, troubled and disturbed, feeling sad and sick at heart, and yet not knowing exactly what troubled her. She could not disentangle her confused feelings; one thing only was clear—that from the moment Felix Grey had crossed her path again, his presence—the mere sight of him—had struck through the fragile shield she had erected between her and the past, shivered that thin, smooth surface tranquillity into atoms, utterly as a shell shatters the clear crystal pane. She was happy, she told herself, very happy; who should be happier than she?—whose prospects showed more fair? Happy she was, in truth; happy as mortal woman awakened from her first dawning dream to life and noon can be, hopeful as youth at the gates of a fair future should be—but the peace, the serenity she had lately enjoyed was broken.

The next day was Sunday; after breakfast came church; after church came luncheon; after luncheon some of the guests strayed up to the gallery, Julius Lusada, Calla, and Felix among them. She had spoken scarcely ten words to Felix that day; at meal-times they had been far apart; in the church expedition she had joined the driving and he the walking party. Now in the gallery, as they sauntered along criticizing Cavalier and Roundhead, Reynolds and Gainsborough, she went frankly to his side.

"Do you know, Felix," she said, "I have discovered a likeness to you in two of these portraits? See, that young Puritan over there—Clement Godwyn, who was killed fighting for the Commonwealth—move this way and you will get a better light. Now, don't you see a reminiscence of yourself?"

"It must be a distant one," he observed, "not that I am a fair judge, for a man doesn't study his own features much as a rule, unless he's an Adonis. But I don't think, Calla," he added, with his quiet smile, "that you're flattering the Puritan soldier."

"But there is a likeness of *you* there, Felix, that's a fact," interposed Lusada. "I notice it more, now you're here. Look at that mouth and chin!"

"That other portrait, of that uncle of Miss Godwyn's, is even more like, I think," said Calla, and on to the other portrait they moved.

Felix looked at it, indifferently enough, though with a light passing curiosity. As the artist had portrayed it, making no doubt the best of every beauty, it looked too bright and handsome a face for him to plead guilty to recognizing a likeness to himself; but he did recognize it, and noticed it the more the longer he looked.

Miss Wroughton noticed it too; Mrs. Bertram did not think it was at all like; Mr. Yorke agreed with her, but on Calla's pointing out, he was won to acknowledge a certain reminiscence in the outline of the lower part of the face.

"That was the black sheep of the family, wasn't it?" said Miss Wroughton, waxing thus free in her comments as none of the family were present. On somebody's hazarding an answer in the affirmative, she continued, "One might imagine so—he's good-looking enough. I like black sheep."

"Thanks for myself and brethren," observed Tom Yorke.

"If beauty be a test of blackness," remarked Mrs. Bertram, "I scarcely think Mr. Percy Godwyn handsome enough to merit the evil reputation."

"Poor Percy Godwyn's chief blackness in British eyes, I guess," said Lusada, "consisted in his running away to the other side of the world and never coming back. He was a right good fellow in his way—he had his faults."

"What kind of faults?" inquired Calla.

"Just such as perhaps you would have been least inclined to pardon, lady mine," he said smiling.

"Did you know him, then?" asked Mrs. Bertram, languidly curious.

"As one knows hundreds of fellows whose paths cross ours for a day. Fate flung us together once for a little time. We weren't intimate; we were neither of us of the stuff that makes friendships very readily. When we found out there was a connection between our families, not such a very distant one either, it was a link. We'd have got on well, only the fate that threw us together parted us."

"Well," said Calla, struck by a new thought, "as you knew the original Percy Godwyn, you can tell us—was *he* as like Felix as his portrait is?"

"Why, you see, I didn't know Felix at that time. Percy was a big fellow masked in a great wild black beard."

"The description doesn't suggest any great resemblance," observed Miss Wroughton.

"When you have done libelling *this* gentleman, shall we move on and libel some other of the Godwyn ancestors?" said Felix.

"Libel? Oh, Mr. Grey, have we been saying anything so *very* ill-natured?" asked Mrs. Bertram, casting up a pair of languishing blue eyes.

Felix laughed his old boyish laugh of quiet amusement that Calla had known so well—once.

"I think Miss Yorke's comments were of a libellous nature," he remarked.

"Yes, if the greater truth the greater the libel," said Calla, with a gay smile and toss of her head.

Thus they pass by the portrait of Percy Godwyn, laughing, chattering lightly. How often it must have happened in the old days of trap-doors and dungeons, oubliettes and secret panels, that light and innocent feet tripped unsuspectingly over the trap-door, and merry laughter echoed over the stone that closed the oubliette, unknowing of its ghastly depths, and unconscious young hands of children at play fell accidentally close to the spring of the secret panel.

Just so in the gallery of Godwyn Grange this day, as they stand smiling, careless, sauntering along in comfortable noon-day nonchalance, they are treading close to a secret spring of which none of them dream. They are so near to it; it seems at every step they must touch it and start to see its disclosure break upon them. So close to the surface lies the hidden thing of whose existence they have no suspicion! It lies so shallowly, so slightly, yet so securely hidden! If one of them but only guessed at its existence, how soon the shallow covering could be cast aside, and the lost secret—lost, and yet lying unsuspected so close to those it most concerns—brought to the light of day. If but so much as a passing thought, a moment's suspicion, lead them to the search, how instantly they would strike upon the grave where *that* lies buried whose resurrection should bring sorrow, and shame, and—— Could it bring joy in the train of these? Was ever the flower of a sinless, stainless happiness known to bloom on a grave such as this?

They pass on, unsuspecting; they leave the secret spring unpressed, the seal still on the tomb.

Neither on Felix nor on Lusada does the remotest idea of the hidden truth dawn. And as for Calla, she would as soon suspect "murder most foul and most unnatural" in those she best loves, as dream of sin and shame being hidden where nevertheless they have long lain concealed—in the spot she would have pointed out as the

very last in which to seek for them. So safe and silent and secure the secret lies; and it is written that the spring which guards it shall not be touched, however close upon it they tread in their blindness.

The next day some of the gentlemen of the party go out riding. Julius Lusada and Felix Grey, who in their early life had half lived on horseback, and would not have grumbled much if Circe had turned them into Centaurs, are of course of this party. It is unnecessary to observe that Lusada as a matter of course mounts the wildest and most vicious mare in the stables, and appears to enjoy those frolicsome endeavours to pitch him out of the saddle, which cause Calla, as she stands watching the party out of sight, some alarm. She has not joined the riding party, partly because no other ladies have voted for so doing, but firstly and foremostly because her education in riding has been neglected. She had been on a donkey; has ridden a mule in Switzerland, and once mounted a quiet pony at Brighton—and that is the extent of her equestrian experience.

She watches Felix's grey steed and Lusada's chestnut out of sight regretfully, almost painfully, not so much on account of any uneasiness as to the safety of the chestnut's rider, for she holds in him, under any superficial anxiety, an absolute confidence and security, but because they will be out some hours—and this is Felix's last day at Godwyn, and friends though they are, friends though they must always be, she sees so little of him.

They are under one roof; they eat at the same table, lounge in the same drawing-room, listen to the same songs, walk in the same garden. Yet it seems to her that they never draw a whit nearer to each other; they are as strangers, though they smile and say, "Good night, Felix," and "Good morning, Calla," still, as friends. What it is that keeps them so apart? It is no surveillance of Lusada's, no endeavour of hers. It must be, can be, almost an imperceptible caution and avoidance *of his*. Not one word has she had alone with him; not for one moment have they two stood together without others whose presence, however silent and unobtrusive it was, yet came between them; not one allusion to old times has passed either of their lips; never once has she caught the old mutually comprehending smile of familiar friendship and perfect sympathy, nor once has he pressed her hand

"But as all others may,
Or—so very little longer!"

So little longer, indeed, she almost doubts whether he made any difference at all between her and all others.

This situation that she had once dreamt might have a certain sweetness in it—the old love mellowed into the moonlight of friendship, the new love rising to its zenith as her life's sun—was not sweet or satisfactory at all; the real position bore very little likeness to the ideal one.

Yet she could scarcely say she wished it was at an end, or was glad it was the last of the three days.

At five o'clock tea the riders have returned, but at the muster of that feminine gathering they do not all very punctually answer to the roll-call. Calla more than half suspects that refreshment of another kind is being served elsewhere. In the absence of Lusada and Felix, they are the topic of a good deal of remark.

"By Jove! to see those fellows ride!" Mr. Yorke observes, with such enthusiasm that he nearly oversets his cup of tea.

"We must have them down for the hunting," says Arnold Godwyn.

"One of them, at least, will open the eyes of the natives if you do," observes the other.

"He has done that already with those wild charges across country," interposes the host laughing.

"Grey will do well enough," continues Mr. Yorke, "but I doubt if Lusada can ever be got to fall in with the laws of the field."

"These especial equestrians must cause you some anxiety as to your horses, Mr. Godwyn," observes Miss Wroughton.

"What do they do?" inquires Mrs. Bertram vaguely and languidly, stirring her tea.

"I can tell you by guess-work," replies Calla laughingly. "They forget they are in a civilized land of hedges and fences, and they fling themselves full speed over them."

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through briar,
Over park, over pale,
And 'through flood' if not 'through fire!'"

"That is about it, Miss Yorke," says Mr. Godwyn, "and a treat it was to see them charge Bromley Common at a stretching gallop, racing neck and neck."

"Ah, that chestnut of yours - Wildfire - she's a real beauty," observes Tom Yorke, with an air of almost loving appreciation.

"She is," assents Arnold Godwyn; "she has a bit of a temper; but Lusada swears there's not a bit of vice about her."

Calla smiles to herself, having been informed, previous to this day's experience, on the best authority that Wildfire is the most vicious brute in the stud, and only one groom dares ride her.

The equestrians, possibly through modesty after their feats, but more probably because they are enjoying a quiet and retired smoke, do not make their appearance; and Calla goes out into the garden to sit on the lawn seats under the elm-trees with the Bertrams and Miss Wroughton, and Robert Godwyn, who determinedly plants himself on a stump at her feet, and looks upward as at his queen.

A casual mention of a case in a daily paper guides the conver-

sation, so that it turns on the cheerful subject of lunatics and lunatic asylums. It is not a pleasant subject to Calla, of course; but a sort of fascination in the very unpleasantness of it makes her join in it with interest. As to the rest, they enjoy horrors as people not personally affected by them always do, and having skimmed lightly over the anecdotes of the man who believed himself a barley-corn, and the girl who thought she was a tea-pot, they plunge with much gusto into terrifying stories of murders and midnight alarms, gibbering idiots and lunatic homicides.

"These would be suitable lullabies to listen to the last thing at night, wouldn't they?" suggests Miss Wroughton.

"I have been over six lunatic asylums," announces Robert confidentially to Calla.

"Six!—what a taste for horrors you must have!"

"I would not go over one for all the world," sighs Mrs. Bertram.

"I only like to hear the romances of the lives immured there."

"I am not frightened of *anything*, as a rule," says Miss Wroughton, "but I *was* rather alarmed once when going over an asylum. A most horrible old man, looking rather galvanized than alive, thrust out a claw-like hand through a grating and clutched hold of my wrist. I was not alone, and of course I was quite safe *really*; but it was not pleasant, especially as he was one of the very worst cases—he had murdered his own daughter, a girl of sixteen, of whom he was dotingly fond. I was a girl of sixteen myself at the time, and I shall never forget those wild eyes of his glaring at me through the bars, and his claw-like fingers on my arm."

"Odd how, whenever mad people murder anybody, it's always sure to be some child, or wife, or parent they're very fond of," remarks Robert Godwyn.

"It is always so. Wasn't there some niece, or cousin, or something of old Fitzgerald's who married a man who went mad and committed suicide?" observes Mr. Bertram.

"No, I don't think he committed suicide. Didn't he kill her? I forget exactly what it was, but I know there was some sad story. I don't know who told me—I heard something about it somewhere—but it was his granddaughter, I think, not his niece," says Mrs. Bertram.

"Are you nervous, Miss Yorke?" demands Miss Wroughton suddenly—"because you are looking so very pale."

"I am not in the least nervous. But that was a ghastly picture you drew of the old man thrusting his hand through the bars. I was seeing it in my mind's eye."

"Here come Emily and Mr. Grey," announces Robert. "Emily has got some good horrible stories, I know," he continues with relish: "you ask her; and she'll tell you about the man who had seven sons——"

"Who all went mad?" guesses Miss Wroughton, interrupting him. "It begins more like a fairy-tale than a tragedy."

Calla rises up and leaves them to the enjoyment of their horrors, and crosses the lawn hurriedly to meet Emily Godwyn and Felix Grey, not caring in the least whether her action is conspicuous, only determined that he shall not be drawn into a conversation to him so painful.

"Well, Felix, and how did you enjoy your ride?—and why did you desert us at tea-time?" she begins, plunging into conversation with unusual animation and freedom; and then, turning to Miss Godwyn, in a manner takes possession of the two, and lingering on the lawn, keeps them lingering with her. The group under the elm-trees apparently can dispense with Miss Godwyn's story of the seven sons at which Robert so temptingly hinted, or more probably Robert himself is endeavouring to narrate it, for he is evidently holding forth much to his own satisfaction.

Calla wishes that their hostess would pass on to that group, and leave Felix here with her. Here and now would be the opportunity she so longs for of a little pleasant friendly confidential talk that would bridge over the gulf which she feels with perplexity and pain to be daily widening. But Emily Godwyn does not leave them. More annoying still, Felix does not seem to wish that she should—he will not in any way direct his especial attention to Calla; he gives to Miss Godwyn the lead in the light chit-chat, and keeps himself in the background while the minutes slip away, until Yorke and Lusada come out from the house and join them, and *that* chance is gone.

"Why could not Miss Godwyn have walked on?—she *might* have reflected that two old friends might like a few minutes' quiet chat," thinks Calla impatiently and unjustly. "And now this is his last day, and I shall *never* have a chance of a quiet talk with him.

She is glad she stood between Felix and the group under the elm-trees, who, all unconsciously, were touching on the tragedy, the shadow of which has marred his life, and spoiled the fairest season of her youth. She knows what "Fitzgerald" family it must have been that they were vaguely alluding to, and wondering about, and rejoices that in their indifference and forgetfulness they came no nearer to the mark. Apart from her anxiety to shield him, now and ever, from any allusion that should darken that ever-present shadow that must brood over him, those chance words spoken have set her thinking on the old question, the old sorrow again.

"What is done cannot be undone." They are parted; they have left their brief sweet dream of love behind; the past is a past beyond recall, and before them lie their separate paths, diverging wide. It is well, surely. Even when the sense of that separation comes home

to her with the bitterest regret, when she feels the aching consciousness of a vacancy and a void in her once completed life, the loss of *something* gone beyond recall, whose place no new joy can ever fill—she cannot say that it is otherwise than well.

It was duty only that divided them, no lack of love. It was *his* will. He deemed that duty called, he answered to the summons for himself and for her. She had followed under his standard, and carried out his will. She cannot question now that he was right. Yet she cannot realize the truth of the curse that separates them. It is well proven, but somehow it seems an impossible and distant dream to her. Those horrible stories of mania and murder! what could Felix ever have to do with them in even the wildest possibilities of the future? How can they be connected even by the most distant links of association with such as *he*? What if his father, what if his brother fell under the family curse? Still and ever *he* seems to her to stand apart from it and them.

Those calm, dreamy, deep-brown eyes of his—his mother's beautiful eyes!—what could they ever know of the furtive ferocity, the wavering, cunning gleam, even the mere vacant unrest of madness. Thinking on this subject now that Felix is so near to her again, Calla feels no alarm, no relief as to the "might-have-beens" of the possible life from which they two have turned away, only a sense of utter unreality and impossibility in the danger. It seems a shadow that separated them, no substance.

Still never for a moment does she dream that the past will have power to cloud her future. Its ghost haunts her present just now, naturally for a time. But that fair past is safely dead and buried. She has put up its tombstone and written its epitaph herself. The harmless ghost may walk yet for a day or a week. But time will lay it. It will fade in the light of the dawning day—the day that dawns so fair. A bright cloudless noon is before her. Love has not fled from her for ever in the closing of one dark night; his light is filling all her sky again. Youth, hope, love, beauty guard her around. All is well.

Felix, too, is reiterating to himself hour by hour that it is well. They woke from their sweet dream in time; she has recovered from the pain of the waking—forgotten it, perhaps. It has only shadowed her young life, as he had trusted, "for the clouds and showers of an April day." She will be happy and proud, safe-shielded and sheltered, in Julius Lusada's love.

That Lusada loves her truly and fondly, Felix can have no doubt. He sees them together daily, sees the mutual smile of perfect sympathy, the magnetic consciousness when she is looking at him which draws him to turn and meet that look—the reflected light of the same thought flash from eyes to eyes. He hears the unconsciously tenderer tone in Lusada's voice when he speaks to her—he

watches with that silent penetration which sees unseen, and observes unsuspected and retired, this lion lying tamed and purring at a girl's feet, satisfied in the full consciousness of his unmastered strength to rest and bask awhile.

Yes, it is well for her, Felix thinks, well for Lusada, too; and for himself? Well, let come what may, there is work enough waiting to be done; there is plenty of room in the world for the expenditure of all energies—there is more in life than love.

Their last evening at Godwyn Grange passes quietly, as the rest have done. Some people resort to the innocent diversion of draughts and dominoes; some contribute to the general entertainment by setting and keeping the ball of conversation rolling; Mrs. Bertram sings two doleful ballads of her own composition, after which—possibly in anticipation of a third—some of the gentlemen slip away stealthily to the smoking-room.

The next morning Felix returns to London; this is Calla's last thought at night, her first in waking, though she tries to believe that she is quite indifferent to the fact.

She is unusually gay and lively at breakfast, and seems brimming over with exuberant vitality and mirth and laughter. Miss Godwyn notices this, and Calla would be amused if she could know how curiously wrong an interpretation her hostess puts on her lively manner at the time of Felix Grey's departure. Emily Godwyn is keen enough of perception to have suspected some repressed and unacknowledged interest, crushed down and carefully kept in the background, between Felix and Calla, but her ideas have gone off altogether on the wrong track. She has seen in her day cruel, albeit unintentionally cruel, games played by girls in the full flush of youth and beauty and triumph, who never heeded the mischief they were doing any more than a child chasing a butterfly. She likes Calla, but, misled by her brightness and high spirits, she fancies her to be, from simple coquetry and caprice, in all innocence and thoughtlessness, while perfectly loyal to her troth—playing such a game where she stakes nothing, and her lover's friend unwittingly hazards all his peace. Calla indeed has been a better actress than any who knew her could ever have dreamt she would prove, since the only woman who observes something in the background gives it quite a wrong shape and colouring.

It is nearly time for Felix to start to catch his train. He and Lusada are passing from the billiard-room along the picture-gallery; Calla is coming in the opposite direction from her own apartment, and so, among the pictures in the morning light, the three meet.

"Are you bidding a brotherly adieu to your own likeness?" she says lightly, looking from Felix to the wall where hung the portraits of the Puritan martyr who died accursed by his house, and of Percy Godwyn, self-exiled from it.

"I said my good nights last night, as I came along here after midnight," he responded, "and half wondered whether these old ghosts don't come down out of their frames, and hold strange revels here in the dead of night. You have no idea what an eerie place this is in the small hours, lit up by one lamp."

"The house *is* haunted, they say," observes Lusada quite gravely, "but only when there's danger and death to any of the family. I told you, Calla, didn't I? that the sign of evil here is a strange light flashing about in places where no mortal light can be?"

"Yes, you told us that on our last night at La Basse-Rive, and how it was last seen when Percy Godwyn was lost at sea."

"And that is only two years or so ago. It is not only an old legend, you see—the superstition holds its own in modern days."

"It is strange," says Felix meditatively.

They are touching the very spring of that shallowly-hidden secret again. Is the spring rusted, that even now, when these three in their unconsciousness lay hand upon it, it does not move?

"Are you going back to La Basse-Rive?" inquires Calla of Felix, the allusion having brought the place to her mind.

"No, I think not yet. I shall most likely stay a little while in London."

"You will look us up, then, of course? You know the hours we are likely to be at home, and we shall not leave London for some weeks yet, I suppose," she observes, in a light and ordinary tone, as she stands by Lusada's side, and in a half-unconscious anxiety to assure herself that she is right and safe, within the strict boundaries of friendship, and only fulfilling the duties of friendly courtesy, she glances up at him.

He smiles down on her with his grave, gentle smile; his steel-bright falcon eyes soften with the rare tenderness in which a strong man regards the woman whom he loves, the soft vine twining round his life, who beside his strength seems fair and fragile and helpless as a child. With one of those passing and half-involuntary demonstrations that look so little and mean so much, he rings the end of the ribbon that binds her hair round his finger, and smoothes it back into the place from which it had strayed, and his hand lingers on the soft dark locks.

Felix, by sheer force of will, compels a smile to his lips as he replies to her by half-a-dozen words of casual commonplace.

"We are friends, and she is happy. I should be content," he says to himself, while the fangs of a forbidden love, whose once-upon-a-time sweetness seems turned to fire—of a jealousy that he scorns as a sin and a shame, drive deep into his heart, "sharper than a serpent's tooth."

The dog-cart that is to bear departing guests to the station is at the door; the hall bell clangs out its summons. Ten minutes later

Felix Grey is gone, his last glance back into the great hall of Godwyn showing him Lusada and Calla standing in the coloured shadows of the stained glass-windows, together; the bars of many tinted light striking across her white morning-dress, one golden gleam glorifying her head like an aureole, and by some heavenly alchemy transmuting the shadowy coils of her dark hair to sunshine as the notes dazzle and dance upon it. Why need she look so lovelier than ever now, as if to blind his eyes with the more memory of the sun that has set for him?

He is gone! and the chance of a random touch baring to the light the hidden truth that is lying lost so near is gone with him.

CHAPTER XXV

“ONCE DRINKING DEEP OF THAT DIVINEST ANGUISH!”

FROM the day when the news burst upon Europe that France had set the torch to the pile laid ready for kindling, and that the history of the summer of 1870 would be memorable in the red-lettered annals of war, we all remember how swift and steady was the march of events, with how sure a stride they moved inexorable to the end that no horoscope had forecast, the end unseen by all, and most of all unseen by him whose hand, like Frankenstein's, set free the fate that was to follow him to his fall. So rapidly that bystanders stood breathless, the armies of France and Germany drew to the battle-ground, whilst wild rumours and contradictory reports flashed along the telegraph wires from centre to centre, and Europe watched and waited for the first shot to sound the signal round the world that the game of death was begun.

Calla watched all the proceedings with deep interest; her sympathies lay naturally all with the land she loved, where she had spent so many happy seasons. Fortunately for the peace of the lovers, Julius Lusada's sympathies inclined in the same direction, although as a rule Calla did not find his political views readily conformable to her own and had spent a good deal of time in inducing him to comprehend that a monarchy need not of necessity be a despotism. She found fiction pale in the light of living history, discarded the perusal of novels in favour of daily study of the newspapers, and re-read with new enthusiasm Macaulay's "Lays," and Dobell's "England in Time of War."

Public interests, however, never ran any chance of eclipsing private ones with her, and no matter how exciting was the news at which the head-lines of the daily papers hinted, she never forgot at

the usual hours to watch for Felix's coming, to wonder, as days passed, why he did not come.

When after a little while he did call to pay his promised visit, it happened, by a chance which for the moment both he and Calla felt to be rather embarrassing, to occur at an hour when Lusada was there with her alone, Mr. Yorke and Mrs. King both being out, and having left the plighted pair to a pleasant *tête-à-tête*, which they were, at the time when Felix entered, employing in the mutual perusal of Sydney Dobell's unrivalled war-lyric, the "Evening Dream" of Inkermann.

In real life, however, such embarrassments as these melt away like morning mists, unless a morbidly sensitive imagination exaggerates them into casting a serious shadow over an occasion that might otherwise pass unclouded by an oppressive consciousness. We waste a good deal of fretting over pebbles in our way that we might tread down without noticing them.

Only for a moment Felix half wishes that his visit had chanced at another time; only for a moment a faint flush crimsons Calla's cheek as she smiles a quiet welcome and pushes away the volume which was rapidly fanning her patriotism to white heat, and forgets suddenly that Inkermann was ever fought, and loses utterly in her own personal feeling all sense of the great world outside.

Lusada holds out a cordial hand to Felix, and there is no shade of reserve or restraint in his glad and genial tones, and the fraternal greeting with which—as the visitor manifests some involuntary momentary hesitation—he fairly pulls Felix forward into the room.

They begin of course immediately, as every one all over London is beginning to-day, "Well, what do you think of to-day's news?" They plunge down deep into war politics, keeping, however, just near enough to the surface not to dive beyond Calla's powers of following them. This is no great hardship, for even though her knowledge of these subjects may not quite keep pace with her interest in them, she is one of the girls to whom a man can talk in the full confidence of a ready comprehension, a bright, alert intelligence, rather receptive than perceptive, following every word.

In the course of a little while, Lusada rises and takes up a brigandish-looking hat—one of the relics of his days of non-civilization—and looks about for his gloves.

"You are not going?" says Calla, with becoming surprise in her tone, and a flutter of something that is half relief and half a sudden agitation she could not explain at heart.

"Not going, old man?" says Felix, starting up too, as if Lusada's movement gave the signal for his own departure.

"Must be off now," responds his friend cheerily; "I shall see you soon again, Calla. Sit down, old fellow," and he flings his arm round Felix's shoulder with the old familiar affection and com-

radeship, and pushes him back to his chair. "I dare say you two old friends have plenty to say to each other."

"But must you go?" asks Calla, as a mere form of words, for she knows well now that he will not stay.

"Good-bye," is his only answer, as he takes her hand—"Good-bye, dear boy," as he turns to Felix.

So he leaves them together; they two are alone for the first time since their parting at La Basse-Rive. At Godwyn Grange they had never a word alone, and Lusada noticed and knows this, although it was no work nor will of his that kept them so apart. However well or ill he reads Calla's heart, he feels, perhaps, that it is her unuttered, unaeknowledged, even unconscious will that he is obeying now, or more probably he acts in obedience to an instinct of his own that he himself could not explain.

He leaves them, and Felix's eyes follow him to the door with a flash of enthusiasm and perfect comprehension. That look is one of those rare ones that for a moment light up almost startlingly his calm, thoughtful face, and says now plainer than words can speak,

"Noble, generous fellow! Yes, you *may* trust me."

While he is looking after Lusada, Calla's eyes are fixed on him, questioningly, observantly for a moment, and then, like a reflected light, that expression on his face passes to hers, and the same glow shines on both.

For some moments they are both quite silent, and yet in the silence there is no embarrassment. Then Calla looks down, and picks up a strip of embroidery she had tossed aside an hour ago, and holds it idly and absently, her needle vaguely wandering about in search of the last stitch; it looks more at home and at ease to profess to be occupied, however lightly, in some light work. It is Felix who breaks the silence with some common-place remark, and after her answer, there comes another pause, only a brief one this time.

"And you are happy, Calla?" he says, with the old grave kind smile, in a tone that requires an answer, and yet is more of assertion than interrogation.

"Yes, I ought to be," she replies clearly, with a responsive smile, and some touch of the old confidence and affection softening her look and tone. Then it occurs to her that her answer in that form of phrase is scarcely positive enough, and she adds, gently and deliberately, "And I *am*."

"That is well," he says sincerely. "I am glad to see your way of life lies so fair and open before you. I did not over-praise my friend, did I?"

"You did not indeed. He is all that you said, and more."

"I thought you would find it so. You are not going to be married just yet, I understand?"

"Oh! no. Papa," she replies, as if the mere mention of papa's name were quite sufficient reason and explanation.

"Yes; he has not had much of his little daughter lately, and doesn't wish to lose her too soon," Felix observes comprehendingly.

"That is it. So there is no talk of—anything—just at present." Calla's air of calmness in alluding to her marriage is just a shade less successful than Felix's, but still it is a very fair performance. "Papa wants to do Scotland and the Highlands and the English lakes this summer."

"Won't you and Yorke be coming over to the Château again, then?"

"No; why I have only just this season left it, you know, after a visitation of—I'm ashamed to count how many months. But I do wish Isabel would come to London."

"How is she, poor child?" he asks tenderly.

"Oh! she is quite well, but so dull, liable to such despondent moods. It is rather a lonely, monotonous life for her, you know."

"Yes, an unsatisfactory life—too much time for brooding, too little occupation. I am going over there shortly; I must try to induce my mother to let me take Bell for a tour."

"I *wish* you would!" Calla rejoins eagerly; "but I don't think dear Mrs. Darrell will ever let Bell stir away from her."

"True," he agrees gravely. "I fear she will not."

"What are your plans for this year?" inquires Calla.

This question sets Felix talking upon his plans, which appear rather unformed and shapeless just at present, as indeed most plans of travels in this disturbed season are. He is arranging for the publication of a volume of sketches of Italy and the East; and as soon as that is settled he will be off for a brief visit to La Basse-Rive, and then off again somewhere else, but whether to Norway and Sweden, to Paris or to Berlin, he seems uncertain. Much must of course depend on the state of affairs on the Continent. It appears at present probable that there may be a general exodus of English families from France, in which case he shall suggest to his mother the prudence of following the general example; but none can guess yet how the season will turn out, there may be no disturbances sufficiently serious to compel them to move, and, for himself, the excited state of the country will only render his coming trip a more interesting one.

He inquires how she is getting on with her writing, offers a gentle criticism on a short story of hers which has lately appeared, just in the old, privileged, brotherly way; and goes on to tell her about his travels during the past year or two, his forthcoming volume of "Pen-pictures" thereof, and so branches off from his own book, and travels to other people's books and travels, which are very much less interesting to her.

They sit chattering easily and pleasantly enough; the surface is all calm and smiles, yet in this hour that she had desired there is far more pain than pleasure to her now. She had wished—her only wish—to see him as a friend, again alone, as in the old days, *really* her friend, and not, as at Godwyn Grange, an acquaintance who smiled “Good morning” and “Good night,” and in all save common-place public chit-chat was shut apart from her. Now he is here with her alone, her friend and brother once more; but the fruit of her fulfilled desire seems all to have turned to bitter ashes; the very calmness of their conversation frets her heart with an impatient pain. She longs for some mention of the past, some assurance that it is not only with *her* that all is well. Friends may allude to any past in all safety and freedom. And they are surely friends. Without some allusion to the past that lies so safely dead and buried, she cannot rest content.

We visit the tombs of our dead. Why, then, fear to look back on the grave of our hopes,

“Wi’ the green grass growing over them?”

An irresistible impulse possesses her, drawing her to lift the veil from off the face of one silent memory, and see whether it is sleeping or waking, living or dead, in his heart.

“I am afraid Isabel is very lonely,” she says at last suddenly, with an abrupt reversion from the topic of the day, on which they had just been speaking, back to their words in the early part of the interview. His sister is the nearest and easiest approach to the subject of himself. “I wish she were here. I wish I could give her part of my pleasures here. She would enjoy them. It seems unfair that I should have all the——” she hesitates for a word, he supplies it.

“All the happiness. Enjoy it and be thankful,” he says gently. “You are fitted by nature for happiness, Calla, you will be happy.”

“Are *you* happy, Felix?” she asks with sudden earnestness, fixing her large dark eyes, full of intent inquiry, on his face. He answers rather slowly, with the steadfast look and tone of perfect truth.

“Sometimes I am happy. I have sufficient work to do to occupy me and to keep me from brooding. There are different kinds of happiness in the world. Some forms of happiness are not beyond my reach. For those that are forbidden to me, I have ceased to long.”

Her eyes sink slowly from their intent gaze upon him, and after a moment’s silence she says softly,

“And we, you and I, shall always be good friends?”

“Always, dear, always,” he replies gravely.

“Be happy,” she says entreatingly and more agitatedly than

before, after another pause. "You *will* be happy, Felix? For how can I ever be happy if you are not?"

"Our ways are not likely to lead much together," he answers calmly and gently. "And when you think of me, Calla, think of me as being happy—always as happy."

If Felix were left to his own judgment and his own choice, the interview, as far as all personal allusions and memories are concerned, would end here. He sees that in her heart the ashes of the past are glowing again into living fire. He knows that in his own heart that fire burns with a fiercer flame than ever. "Many waters cannot quench love;" the waves of time, of absence, of hopeless severance, assail it in vain. He knows this now, and by his knowledge he would take warning and avoid running the risk he sees so near. But can ever a woman let a man keep within the limits he has marked to himself of his own endurance? Is she ever content until she has set a lighted match within half an inch of the gunpowder train? One here and there may refrain from actually setting the match; but she longs to set it all the same. Calla is no exception to the general rule of her sex under circumstances such as these.

It is true that all she says is—

"Felix! Felix!"

But the tone of her voice, the quiver of her lip, the look of her eyes, so full of love and yearning and passion and pain, is enough to light the match that lies ready to kindle into flame at even less than these. Still Felix tramples on the rising fire, grasps the temptation and thrusts it from him like a living, struggling foe.

"Calla, child," he says, with desperately compelled calmness, "have you not learnt yet that the forces of good and evil are balanced in us all? Let the evil sleep. Now when the devil tempts me to galvanize the dead—to no avail and with no hope—do not you help it. You and I are parted, Calla. Remember that; remember all that parts us two, and do not tempt me to presume on what influence I may still hold, to no possible good, and to no end but pain."

She has no word to say in answer, nor, if she wished to speak, could she trust her voice to utterance. Her beautiful eyes dim slowly with unshed tears; they never turn from his face, and a sort of half-reproachful, half-penitent distress in them, a patient, helpless sorrow like a child's, pierces straight to his heart. He is afraid he has been unkind."

"Calla, you think me cold, you think me harsh and stern. Perhaps it is best you should think so. But yet for once—for one last time—your eyes force me to own the truth. As I loved you always, as I loved you on that sunshiny morning on the sands at La Basse-Rive, so I love you now, Calla, and shall love you to the day I die.

But for all the world I would not have you sacrifice your beautiful young life to the memory of—of the hopes we had, the dream we dreamt once.”

Calla's breast heaves as her heart beats fast and deep. Still she feels unable to speak, only her lovely, passionate, plaintive eyes flash now with pride and joy—she is conscious of nothing in the world but that he loves her still! and the tears that had dimmed the long black lashes seem to dry and vanish in this sudden light.

His hands clench themselves tight; his breath comes short; and he is pale as a man engaged in mortal struggle. He is silent so for a moment or two, then he draws nearer to her; he takes her hand in his, his arm is round her again. Looking up from her as if addressing some presence unseen, he says,

“Lusada, true friend, forgive me. This is my one disloyalty to you.”

As he speaks, he has drawn Calla closer to his side. She makes no effort to release herself from his arm; she looks up in his face, thinking nothing of past nor future, knowing only that they two are together again; remembering nothing of all that should sever them still.

“I thought you had forgotten, Felix!” she whispers, almost unconsciously.

“Forgotten!” he echoes. “Child, did you ever know, did you ever *dream*, how I loved you?” He can say no more—it seems to him in that moment as if he had scarcely known himself the force of that love till now. He has no other word to utter, only as she looks up his lips meet hers, as in the long past happy days.

For once in his life Felix Grey loses his steadfast self-control; for once—the first and the last time—he is tried too far, and breaks down under the trial. He strains her to his heart, as if she were again his own; he kisses her with all the mingled passion of meeting and of parting, of love and of despair. It is but a few moments, in reality. It seems to them both brief as a lightning flash, yet long enough to comprise a lifetime of joy and pain.

Felix lets her free suddenly, unclasps his arms with an abruptness that almost pushes her away from him; and while she stands breathless and silent, as one in a dream, he flings himself into a chair, and buries his face in his hands.

The moment's irresistible impulse is past; and a hot glow of shame conflicts with and conquers the flush of passion. He has been weak; he has been disloyal; and till this day weakness and disloyalty have been unknown to him. The temptation was great; but the shame of yielding to it seems surely greater to Felix Grey.

Calla sees that his whole frame is shaken by some overcoming agitation; and as with gentle force she tries to pull his hand away

from his face, she sees that tears are blinding his eyes—the first tears that she has ever known him shed.

This day she has been till now as a very child in her softness and weakness. Now she is suddenly strong. She is a woman, thinking no more of herself nor of her own feelings. The instinct that lies dormant in every woman's nature, the maternal impulse of soothing, calming, caring for, has awakened, self is forgotten, and weakness trampled down.

"Forgive me, Felix," she whispers gently but quite calmly and steadily now.

"Forgive *you*, child, *you*?" he mutters, in a half-stifled voice; "but I! a man—I who should be strong for both!"

"I can be strong for myself now," she answers, "do not fear for me."

She rests her hand softly, firmly, not trembling nor appealing, but encouraging, on his, and does not move it until she sees that the emotion is over and he is himself again.

"It will be best, you see, that you and I should not meet, Calla. It is well that I am going away. Fate has ordered it wisely. I think there is no more to be said between us. It is not well, you see, to dig up the dead."

"Because it is not dead! Were it dead and cold, we might dig back into the past safely enough," she responds resolutely. "But you are right, Felix. Between us there is nothing more that need be said. All that we might say—all that I may long to say—and oh! how much we might say!"—she hesitates, and cannot wholly repress a sigh—"is not needed—is treading on dangerous ground. So let us put on the coffin-lid, and heap up the earth over the past. Never mind if we bury it alive."

This girl speaking now—with the proudly erect head, and the half-mocking, defiant ring in her resolute voice—is not the trembling, tearful, yielding, yearning Calla of only a few minutes before. But that softness was dangerous; and with this firmness Felix is safe, and in full possession of himself.

"Bury it, alive or dead," he answers, as firmly as she. "And we turn our backs upon it, and leave it in its grave; and the separate ways that lie before us, let us walk them bravely, hopefully, Calla."

"We will!" she utters solemnly, looking up as if taking a vow to heaven.

"Other duties and hopes call *you*, Calla; other ties will grow around you; there is work in the world that calls *me*. We live our lives apart henceforth. And on the day when all the dead have resurrection," he adds, with the dreamy, far-away look she knows so well, "let our love rise pure and stainless, in a world where mortal weakness and passion shall never be."

They stand in silence for awhile, without touching a hand or

uttering a word. They are both rapt as if in a dream, only to them this solid earth seems a dream. For the moment they have left it far behind.

Presently their hands meet in a parting clasp ; they say in hushed accents, " Good-bye ! "—no other word, though they know that they are taking now a true and supreme farewell.

BOOK VIII.

THE LAST BATTLE.

“Whether we shall meet again I know not,
Therefore our everlasting farewell take ;
For ever and for ever farewell, Cassius !
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile ;
If not, why then this parting was well made.”

Julius Cæsar.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“A SKELETON DOWN BY A HEARTHSTONE.”

WHEN Julius Lusada came again to Calla—he was never long absent from her side—he asked no question, dropped not even a hint of any inquiry as to her conversation with Felix. He found no sadness, nor coolness, nor new reserve—nay, found even a tenderer softness in her manner. His silence on the subject, that she knew well could not be indifferent to him, sometimes puzzled a little, but never displeased her, and perhaps made her cling to him with a deeper and fuller affection, half self-reproachful and half grateful, than ever before.

Yet she did not quite understand him, then nor ever. She could not fathom and follow the seeming inconsistencies of this nature, so impetuous, and dominant, and self-confident, unruly and indomitable even in the wildest of its resolves, yet so gentle, and trustful, and generous—so startlingly frank sometimes, and yet withal of so delicate a reserve. She never could thoroughly comprehend him; he was always taking her by surprise. Although quick sympathies made her generally comprehending and adaptive, her forte was not analysis of character, and keener eyes than hers had failed ere now to read Julius Lusada altogether aright, perhaps chiefly because they insisted on viewing the nature as a much more complex and intricate one than it truly was. It was drawn on simple lines enough in reality.

“Do you know that I don’t understand you yet?” Calla said to him once, smiling, but with a softly searching look into the face whose failing was certainly not a lack of frankness.

"Don't you, little one? Nor I you. But I guess a man never does thoroughly understand a woman; and maybe I would love you less if your little heart were less a mystery to me," he added, in his quiet candid way, with a mingling of tenderness, and a sort of half-careless contentment to take things as they came.

"That's an encouragement to let it remain a mystery," she said lightly, with a brief glance up from under her long dark lashes—one of those quick up-glances that always carry such a charm.

"Yes," he said, "let it, if you will. I know it's noble, and I know it's true."

It was only a very few days after Calla's parting interview with Felix that the news came to her that he had gone off as "special correspondent" to the scene of war. He started so suddenly that he took no farewells of his friends, with the exception of Lusada, whom he visited on his way to the station. He wrote to Calla a brief note explaining his plans, so far as the plans of a roving correspondent were susceptible of explanation, wishing her good-bye, and bidding her be happy.

Sometimes she fancied—and Felix only could have told whether she fancied rightly or not—that his motive in this sudden movement was to assure himself that the parting between himself and her was a parting indeed, to avert from her path every little cloud of doubts or regrets that his presence in the same city might have caused, and leave her life tranquil and at peace. At other times she thought that the step needed no such motive to account for it. Felix's inclination for travelling and search for some fresh literary work naturally combined to render such an appointment eminently suitable for him.

The summer, so fruitful of events for history to garner up, passed quietly, peacefully, pleasantly to Calla. No new joys brightened, no new sorrows shadowed her life. The delight of knowing that she out of all the world of women was Lusada's choice, the pride of being his idol, the sway that he in his love and his strength held over her, did not diminish. The old memories slept peacefully enough, but they lived and breathed, and stirred softly, as one stirs in a dream sometimes. This is not the story of the war, but of one girl's early womanhood, which this summer was passing peacefully. While the succession of disastrous defeats dragged France down from her glory; when the "fiery circle closed" round Sedan; when the Republic was proclaimed, and the undefended Empire crumbled into ruins in a day, Julius Lusada and Mr. Yorke, and Calla, of course, were travelling about the British Isles, doing Ireland from Dublin to Killarney, and Scotland from Edinburgh to Aberdeen.

It is possible that it was only Calla's influence and the all-potent spell of attraction she exercised over him, which kept Lusada contented with this quiet, unadventurous tour in peaceful and domestic

lands, and prevented him from joining some one or another of the guerilla bands which took part in the great struggle.

To his temperament a long lull from action was at first wearisome, and then, as he waxed impatient under it, unendurable; he must be always marching and moving; repose palled upon him; he would but halt for a brief breathing-space, and then on again; excitement and exertion were the very elements from which he drew his life; and wasted energies would simply have preyed upon and eaten away that strength which lived upon its own exercise.

It is very doubtful whether even his love for Calla could have kept him absolutely stationary for many months; he would have wearied of any one spot. But Calla and her father were moving now from place to place, and he gladly moved too, contented himself with quiet days of easy travelling and comfortable hotels, and seldom sighed to camp out in the open air. He was really getting civilized, Calla informed him, with considerable satisfaction.

It is a mild, early autumn day in Paris, fair and clear, as if Paris were her smiling self instead of the deserted and distracted city hemmed in by the iron ring of relentless foes, and with a yet more fatal foe crouched lurking in the core of her own heart.

Heaps of dust and dirt accumulate unheeded along the once spotless roads; the city is too busy arming now to care for its old beauty. Even now the spiked helmets gleam actually within sight of Paris; the hated Uhlans are drawing nearer—nearer. The streets are almost deserted, save where a squad of young recruits, a battalion of the veteran National Guard, file by; ruin is written in the dismantled, desolate shops, the closed shutters of every other house; the few women who are out in mourning.

"Who that knew her only in her beauty and her glory could recognize Paris now?" observes Felix Grey, as he stands on the threshold of the house where he has an apartment, in conversation with the *concierge* and a friend of the *concierge*, a slim young workman in a blue blouse, with a handsome melancholy face and straight black hair, who is not wholly unknown to Felix, whom the Darrells had seen at La Basse-Rive in the days of peace and plenty—Louis Raquet, indeed, who married the pretty "Maid of the Mill." For here in Paris, with some surprise, Felix had fallen by a chance encounter across all the family from the mill, who on Angélique's marriage had moved to Paris, unhappily for them, in time to be involved in the general ruin.

"And one man's work—all one man's work!" observed Louis bitterly, with a dark look in his soft melancholy Celtic eyes. "He will be called to render his account."

"He is fallen," rejoins Felix quietly.

Night and day the strains of the mad "Marseillaise" echo through

the streets. They burst forth now, as a band of young fellows of the Garde Mobile, in uniforms as yet unstained, come marching down the street. How the notes of that most magnificent of war-songs clash like the ring of crossing steel! What marvel if men fought well to that wild, fierce chorus, which sets the blood leaping, and should strike fire even from a coward's veins!

Night and day Felix has heard it sung of late; yet, well as he knows the turn of every note, it stirs him with a certain thrill of exaltation always.

"There they go," remarks Louis, following the band of young soldiers with his eyes sadly. "They sing loud and clear, don't they? And how long will it be before that handsome boy there, or that tall one with the blonde hair, lies staring up at the sky, with a bullet of the accursed Prussian in his heart?"

"If life would buy the freedom and peace of this unhappy city, who would grudge it?" responds Felix.

"None! But we pay our price in vain," says Louis. "You have well resolved, then, to stay here in Paris, Monsieur?" he adds.

"Yes, I stay."

"Monsieur had best think well. To-morrow it will be too late to change resolutions. There will be no chance of getting outside the walls of Paris by to-morrow."

"I know. All the world is flying by the last train to-day; but whoever leaves Paris now will not be able to re-enter it, and I want to see with my own eyes all that is to pass here."

"Un télégram," says a commissionaire, approaching the *concierger*, "c'a été longtemps en route. Un télégram pour Monsieur"—spelling out the word on the envelope—"G-r-Grey."

"For me?" says Felix, putting out his hand quickly. He expects no telegram, and knows it can be no good news. He tears the thin crackling paper open, and reads—

"From George Darrell to Felix Grey.

"Come to us at once. Your mother is dangerously ill."

"I must leave Paris immediately," he says. "Thank God the last train has not gone!"

"There will be no room," suggests the *concierger*. "Monsieur knows the excitement, the rush. Every place will be taken."

"Whether the places be taken or not, there shall be room for me!"

And there is room for him. Through the crowd and rush that bubbles in a perpetual uproar at the station, men, women and children, struggling their way to the train as if for dear life—and for very life it is indeed that some are flying—Felix forces his way, and he is one of those who that day succeed in beating the retreat from Paris.

The journey to La Basse-Rive seems endless to him. Trains are so slow, travelling so difficult, obstacles foreseen and unforeseen of the contingencies of warfare bar the path, so that it is late the next day before he reaches the Château de la Basse-Rive.

Isabel is watching for her brother; he sees her standing on the threshold as the carriage wheels round the court-yard and draws up at the hall-door.

"Well?" he questions, grasping both her hands. He dares scarcely ask more until her composed, though sad look, reassures him. How is she?

"Very ill. We have been waiting for you so anxiously. We began to fear you could not come."

"The telegram was delayed, and all travelling is difficult now. I received the message only barely in time to get away from Paris on the last day that egress was possible. Now I am here, tell me Isabel, how long has she been ill?—what doctor have you?"

"Dr. La Motte. Mamma has not been really well for some time, though she made nothing of it. When she got worse, we did not at first think it was serious, and Dr. La Motte gave us no cause for alarm at his first visit. Directly he told us there was danger, we sent for you."

"And is there much danger, Isabel?" he asks after a pause.

"Yes," she answers quietly. "We should not have sent for you so urgently if there had not been reason to anticipate the worst; and mamma has asked for you so often—all night and day she has been wondering how soon you could be here."

Felix does not answer—perhaps he cannot, only in his heart he thanks God the message reached him in time.

"The doctor is with her now," continues his sister. "Directly he comes down, I will take you to her. Listen, I think that it is his foot now on the stairs."

Together they turn hastily to the door to waylay the doctor, and seek to read the verdict on his face even before he speaks. That he has no good news for them they see at once. He has learnt to know that all the family at the Château de la Basse-Rive belong to the order of those who can bear to hear, and to whom he may venture to tell, the truth. And gravely and kindly he lets them know the plain truth now.

From the invalid herself that truth cannot be concealed. In the intervals of wearying pain, of the semi-unconscious apathy produced by sedatives, she presses those who watch by her with one question, whose sad answer fill their hearts; her eyes search theirs with a scrutiny that seems to read the tenor of their thoughts as plainly as print. They cannot deceive her even if they would. She knows that she is doomed, and the knowledge gives her no added pain.

It seems half a relief, and yet half a distress to her to see Felix.

Again and again she has asked for him; now he is here, she clings to him with an unusual betrayal of affection, and yet his presence appears to have on her a painfully agitating effect.

All that day they watch her in that dreary anxiety that dares not lift itself for a moment into hope. To Mr. Darrell it is a comfort to have Felix there. The old man seems almost numbed and dazed by his sorrow; he can scarcely realize that he is to lose the wife who has been to him for many years so dear and true and tender a helpmate. Whether she has fully loved him or not, she has been all to him, and half his life will go with her. He leans on his step-son's quiet strength with a sort of relief and reliance. On Isabel, too, in these hours of trouble he looks as if she had been truly his daughter.

"God knows what we should have done without this dear child," he says to Felix, holding Isabel's hand. "She is so indefatigable a nurse—so brave and strong a spirit."

That evening Claudine is watching by Mrs. Darrell; Felix and Isabel are downstairs, wondering when the doctor will come; he is expected every minute.

"You look so tired and worn-out, Bell," Felix says. "Now, while Claudine is with my mother, go to your room and rest. You must get a little sleep now, if you are to sit up to-night again. Go, like a good girl, and trust me to call you if you are wanted."

"No," she says steadily, shaking her head. "I'll stay with you till Dr. La Motte comes. I can't bear to be alone. And I hate sleep. When I sleep I dream."

"Rest here, then," he says, putting a cushion under her head, and gently forcing her to lean back on the sofa. "You must not kill yourself with watching, little sister."

"I can't," she replies, in her low quiet voice. "I wish I could! Do you know, Felix, I have felt quite surely and positively of late that some evil was hanging over us? All my dreams have been of mourning—everything hung with black."

Then, after a pause, she adds, suddenly,

"Calla seems well—and happy?"

"She is—thank God!"

"You have seen her several times?"

"Yes."

"In our peaceful days she was with us—one of us," muses Isabel dreamily.

"If she thought she could help you in any time of trouble, she would be with you still," he responds steadily.

"No—let her bask in her sunshine! It won't last." Isabel makes this remark with no tone of malice or envy, rather sadly indeed, quietly and positively. "There is trouble ahead for all of us. And sooner or later it will come to her."

"May the day be distant!" he rejoins. "It is some comfort to look from out the shadows, and see that she at least is safe in the daylight."

"For a time! But I see dark days coming, Felix—there as here. There is no peace that lasts—every sun sets. How dark the night is!" she adds, after a pause, shivering. "Light the lamp, dear, quickly—*all the shadows seem alive.*"

Felix lights the lamp at her request, and coming back to her side, he looks searchingly, with anxious sadness, into her pale fair face, with the feverish bright light eyes, that have a look as if startled from a dream.

"You are over-tired and nervous, Bell. You have borne too great a strain. Claudine should help you more, or you should get other assistance. I must not have you exhausting yourself."

She smiles faintly, and lays her hand in a grateful caressing way on his; her fingers are like ice; something in their touch, or in his own thoughts, makes him shiver slightly.

"When will Dr. La Motte come?" he says, looking at his watch.

It seems to them long, though it is really not late, before the roll of wheels is heard, and the courtyard gates creak open, and the doctor comes at last. His report is no more favourable. He can hold out no hope; it is a question of time, but he sees no ground for *immediate* alarm. He will come to-morrow morning, not that he anticipates any great change for the next few hours. Still it is well for them to be prepared for the worst at any moment.

That night, when the doctor has gone, Isabel relieves watch, and takes up her post at her mother's bedside. The rest of the household retire to snatch such rest as they may.

Felix throws himself on his bed dressed, and ready to rise at a moment's warning, and, tired with his travelling, presently falls asleep. He does not know whether he has slept hours or minutes, when he is awoken by Isabel. It is pitch-dark, and he can scarcely trace the faint outline of her pale, ghostly figure in the black shadows.

"What is it? Is she worse?" he says starting up.

"Not worse. I think; but she seems feverish, and wants *you.*"

Mrs. Darrell's eyes are turned towards the door, watching, as Felix enters with his sister.

"Now leave us, Isabel," she says. "I want Felix—only Felix."

"*Must* I leave you, mother dearest?" the girl asks tenderly, smoothing the pillow and arranging the coverlet with light, deft touches.

Mrs. Darrell turns her head and kisses that gentle, helpful little hand.

"Yes, my darling—my own—leave me—when I ask you. Leave me with Felix now," she says faintly.

Isabel obeys.

"Do not let her excite herself too much," she suggests softly to her brother as she leaves the room.

"Is the door shut—shut fast?" Mrs. Darrell asks, when Isabel has been gone a minute or two, lifting herself up on the pillow with a nervous, feeble eagerness.

"Yes," he answers, trying the handle.

"And—that other door?"

"Both shut fast."

"Then come here, Felix—I have something to say to you. I never meant to tell it you—I thought I could die and take it with me to the grave—but I can't. I can't die without telling you——"

She pauses, out of breath, and tosses and turns on her pillow in a sort of restless pain.

"Don't agitate yourself, dear mother," he says. "Why should you tell me anything if it pains you to speak of it—whatever it is?"

"I must," she gasps wildly. "I must die, I know, but it will kill me now, at once, if I cannot speak it. It lies at my heart like burning fire; it tortures me till I tell you."

He leans over her, silent, wondering, pained to see her so moved, but seeing well that he must not try to keep her silent now. To thwart her desire to speak would harm her more than the distress of speaking.

"I can trust you, Felix, can I not?" she goes on brokenly, and with a sort of wild hurry in her faint voice, but reasonably and coherently. "From a child you were always true. You can keep—keep all your life—the secret I tell you now?"

"Yes."

"Swear to me, faithfully, never to breathe it to any living creature, and least of all to my Isabel. Keep it from *her*. Swear that your sister shall never, never know it."

"She never shall. No human creature shall hear it from me."

"If it were not—for Isabel," she says more faintly, "you might when I am gone. But for my daughter's sake never, never a word. And—don't reproach me, Felix, for I can't bear it now."

"Mother!—*I!*" he protests, in a tone of bitter pain, and cannot trust his voice to say more. He is thinking more of her suffering than wondering what the secret she has to disclose can be.

"I meant it to die with me," she murmurs meaningly, "but I can't—I can't. Living, I could keep it. I can't die with this secret on my soul. It was so long ago, and I have never been able to forget it for a day. It was when—when—I was young. I married young—too young."

"Well, mother?" he questions, in a very low voice, waiting, wondering still.

She closes her eyes and sighs bitterly; then abruptly, with a sort

of fluttering gasp and tremor, as though the effort exhausted her strength—

“You were at Godwyn Grange?”

“Yes. I was there three days.”

“What did you hear of Percy Godwyn?”

“I only heard his name mentioned; and I saw his portrait.”

“You saw his portrait?—Percy’s? And *you* saw it?”

“Yes, in the gallery—”

He breaks off abruptly, suddenly, as though a sword-stroke had cut his words. Something flashes upon him in a blaze of blinding light. The room whirls round him, things visible and present lose their form, he sees only that pictured face look down from the walls of the gallery at Godwyn Grange.

“He—he,” Mrs. Darrell pants faintly. “It was a lifetime ago—
he—nearer—come nearer, Felix—bend your head close down to me
—are the doors shut safe?—is no one near us?”

Her voice sinks, she whispers almost inaudibly, but every word sounds clear as thunder in his ear.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“TOO LATE, TOO LATE, YE CANNOT ENTER NOW.”

DAY has dawned; sharp swords of steel grey light are striking in through the thin crevices of the closed curtains. It is a weird, uncanny hour, whose chill colourlessness weighs more depressingly than midnight blackness on the spirits of those who are waking and watching, when with the new day there dawns no new hope.

They are all gathered round Mrs. Darrell’s bed, watching her with hushed and tender vigilance. The truth has come home to all their hearts now, that she will never see the decline of this day that is breaking in cold blue light across the east. As the sky reddens and the red sun rises, her strength is sinking ever lower. Presently in her weakness she becomes incoherent, and murmurs brokenly in wild and disconnected snatches. But her wandering spirit seems only straying through fields of childhood and of dream-land, drifting aimlessly among passing fancies of no import or meaning. In all those faint wandering words there are none that throw even a glimmer of light on that far back, dark, and hidden phase of her life, of which only one of those present knows the existence, and he knew it not till now. He watches her with untiring, anxious tenderness; he sees that the secret she had held from all till death was close at hand, she will hold from all but him in death itself. Even in her unconscious murmurings, when reason

and volition seem vanished, the deep brand of years of secrecy is printed still on the wandering brain, and near the borderland of that truth it never strays.

When the morning has waxed to full day, a feeble flicker of strength, as the last leap of the quivering and expiring frame, comes back to her. She knows them all, looks round with a sort of yearning affection from one face to another, stretches out her hand to Isabel.

Then Dr. La Motte comes. While Isabel and Mr. Darrell withdrew to consult apart with him, Felix stays by her side.

"Lift me higher," she says faintly.

He raises her in his arms, rests the poor weary head on his shoulder in infinite tenderness and loving care. She breathes more easily, as if a foreshadowing of the great peace was stealing softly and slowly towards her.

"My soul can pass now. The burden is off me," she murmurs; and after a pause goes on in a low and almost inaudible tone, "I thought—you—might have been hard, but you have been a good son—always, Felix—God bless you!"

He bends and kisses her brow; but he can find no word to utter. His face is as deathly white as hers, as he stands in silence by her side; and in this last hour she leans on him as never in all their lives has she done before. At the last he is her staff and her support; at the last she clings with a certain sense of safety to his strength and faith.

"Keep my trust," she whispers. "I feel content now. Life has been so weary and so long—to me. If pain expiates—if martyrdom atones—I have expiated all. I think my sin is washed away."

These are her last words of confidence to Felix. After these that final flutter of strength dies slowly out: the flame is flickering down in the socket. They are all gathered round her then; they all watch by her in hopeless, solemn suspense to the end.

The end comes about noon. Just at the last she whispers to her husband, "Be good—be good—always—to Isabel," and so sinks back in her daughter's arms, and the troubled soul passes.

Felix is alone in his room, alone with thoughts that fasten like the fangs of the furies on his soul, till it feels numb and dead to all sensation under their grip. But it is not of himself that he has to think now; he has one last trust to discharge this day. There is all a life-time to think in. Five minutes will discharge this one brief last duty now. He locks the door, and takes from his breast a little packet of papers—only a few faded letters, and two or three worn cuttings of newspaper. They have been locked away in the secret drawer of Mrs. Darrell's private desk for years; he is intrusted to destroy them now. He lights a candle, and slowly tears every letter in slips, and burns them one by one, watching them

shrivel into ashy powder that a breath disperses, unread. He knows enough; he seeks to peer no further into the grave of a buried shame. Let the curtain fall again over that dark past; he will never seek to lift it, nor read more of the story than the fact that stares at him grimly out of the shadows. Only on one slip of newspaper he looks with eyes that dare to brave the stab of even this saddest thought of all.

This paper he has seen before, has passed it by unkuowing and unconscious, with a casual glance, and read no word of it, till now. It is an account of the wreck of the "Calypso" in the South Pacific, giving a list of the lost passengers and crew, and under the head of "Passengers Drowned," the first name is "Percy Godwyn."

He recalls the day of his betrothal to Calla, when, full of their fair and mutual hopes, he glanced indifferently at this Australian paper at his mother's side, and wondered at her unusual agitation as he told her of his happy love. Strange that he should have taken to her this tale of hope and joy, on that very day when she read how he whose sorrow and whose sin had been linked with hers—he, dead long ago to her, who yet alone with her in the world now bore their secret—had gone down into the deep sea, and left her to bear it alone, safe, and free, till death. Strange how close to him had lain the disclosure which they would only have struck him with the shock of bitter shame and pain, but which, had it fallen a brief season later, would have borne healing after the wound.

Now it fell too late, too late! What did it matter now that the barrier between him and love had been an imaginary one?—that following a false mirage, which one word of truth would have dispelled, he had with his own hand thrust his life's joy out of his path? It could not matter now. The blow had fallen too late to bear its balm with it; the iron entered into his soul with no soft cooling touch near now to comfort and to soothe.

From the curse he had thought he shared with the rest of the family, it is true that he was free; but this new light that had dawned on him to show him his freedom, showed him, too, bare and unveiled, a wasted sacrifice, a blighted past, and a clouded future, sorrow that was not merely selfish, sufferings that he had not borne alone.

He recalled with strangely mingled feelings, that yet all partook of pain, those hours when, in the gallery at Godwyn, he had looked unconsciously on the pictured dead of those past generations, from which he, too, unknown, had drawn his life—remembered how lightly, in passing, his attention had been called to his own resemblance to that one, outcast in life, forgiven in death, whose bones, brought from the field of Marston Moor, lay mouldering under the marble tomb in Godwyn churchyard, and to that other, on whose image he had looked with no thrill, no stir of the pulse, no touch of

instinct or presentiment, whose living face he had never looked upon and over whose body rolled now the long swell of the Pacific waves.

These life-like shadows of the dead, whose moveless lips had made no sign to him, whose blank eyes had stared down on him from the pinelled walls, unrecognizing, as if disowning him, their images came back to haunt him now. They were his forefathers, whom he might never claim, from whom he was for ever outcast, whose kindred he must conceal tenfold more strictly and sacredly than if it were *his* sin, *his* shame.

For his own safety, he could never have felt this sense of an iron responsibility bound upon his life. In defence of no crime of his own could he have stood forward facing fate as he stood now, sworn to shield through life to death *her* sorrowful secret. For no suffering of his own could his heart have ached in such sore compassion as it bled now for the worse than wasted life of her who had not ruined her own future only, every one of whose errors had spread desolation around on other hearts and homes than hers. We cannot sin to ourselves alone; in every sin we sow the seed of giant sorrows for others to reap with us.

But Felix did not think this now; he only thought, in infinite tenderness and sympathy and love, "The pity of it!"

The whole story he would never seek to know. It was as a buried volume, closed and locked a lifetime since, and buried with her now. The key was lost that would have opened to him the history of the cyclone that had swept down upon her early life and seized it in the resistless grip of the whirlwind, and wrecked and ruined it, and passed, and left her to wake as from a dream of tempest and fever and tropic storm, with a dreary future before her, and a desolated past behind.

The time dragged wearily and sadly on at La Basse-Rive; the hour of the funeral came and went; and then, when those darkest of the dark days were over, they began to put into words the plans which, during this short sad time, had been vaguely taking form in their minds. First among these suggestions stood an immediate departure from La Basse-Rive. This had been under discussion before; indeed, it was probably only Mrs. Darrell's illness which had prevented its being seriously considered. Although she had not appeared to give any support to the idea, it is most likely that Mr. Darrell's wish would have carried the day, and he was strongly of opinion that the disturbed state of all the country around rendered a move advisable. His wife's illness, however, had of course put a stop to all such schemes. Now Mr. Darrell contemplated taking Isabel to England, and after a few days spent in London, partly in rest and partly in business, moving on to some pretty, retired

country village, where they would reside quietly out of the world, while Felix returned to his work as literary correspondent at the scene of war.

Felix's own desire was to proceed back to Versailles and resume his round of duty immediately; but he perceived that a duty nearer home claimed him for a few days first. Mr. Darrell seemed broken down and helpless since his bereavement; Isabel bore it superficially with marvellous calm; their mutual sorrow drew the two together in a way that Felix observed with comfort and relief; but they both alike turned to him for direction in all practical matters connected with the departure and the journey. They were both so totally unaccustomed to travelling, that Felix determined he must at least see them safe to London, and, if possible, spend a day or two there in putting them in the right way to do the best for their comfort, and laying down plans for them to carry out. He felt no scruple nor twinge of conscience in leaving Isabel in her stepfather's care. It seemed the best, the only thing to be done. Gertrude's children were dear almost as his own could have been to George Darrell now. He read in Isabel's fair features the reproduction of her mother's youth; he leant on Felix with an almost blind reliance and faith. Felix felt he could not leave these two till he had seen them securely out of this disturbed land, and safely harboured in the peace and tranquillity on the other side of the silver stream.

So it happened that a week or so after the funeral the Château de la Basse-Rive was "To Let," and was likely to remain "to let" so long as the stormy time which shook the country to its centre lasted. The shutters were put up; dust gathered in the deserted rooms; silence brooded where Love and Joy had reigned, and abdicated, and in whose abandoned kingdom Death had held his court. The grass grew longer and wilder than ever in the orchard where Calla and Felix had laughed and loved the merry morning hours away; and from out the old home, with its sunshine and its shadows, they had passed for ever.

It is a clear autumn evening, and Felix is in London again. Mr. Darrell and Isabel have gone to their rooms, tired and depressed; it is their first evening in the great city, and he is left alone. Once more the same city holds him and Calla; and between them now he knows the barrier is down. No bar holds them apart, save loyalty and honour. Such bars have broken ere now—bars deemed strong as wrought steel, massive as dungeon grates, have snapped in sunder like a thread of silk when all the mighty force of Love has dashed itself against them.

It is not of this possibility that Felix is thinking now. He is forming no plan, dreaming not of the future nor of the past, conscious neither of hopes nor fears, filled only with the one sense, that at this present hour he is near to Calla again. However far apart

their life-paths may lie, they breathe the air of the same city; the mild wind that whispers in at his open window may bear her breath, may even now have hovered round and kissed her cheek. The sense of her nearness oppresses him vaguely; he wishes the seas were between them again; and yet a magnet more powerful even than his will draws him towards her. He flings the window wide, leans out, looks in the direction where she lives. How cool and fresh the evening air is! The autumn night is not warm, but yet the rooms seem suddenly oppressive, stifling. He throws the door open, and on a sudden impulse goes downstairs and out into the quiet street.

He takes the way to where she lives, of course—with no intention of seeing her; nay more, with the firm resolution *not* to see her. But he is drawn irresistibly to hover round the spot, nearer, nearer, till he stands at the very door of the house where the Yorkes at present have their town-quarters.

They are at home, evidently—the dining-room is lit up, and he dimly sees moving shadows against the blind. They are only faintly limned and distant—he cannot distinguish them, but in his mind's eye he pictures the group. Mrs. King, shadowy in the back-ground, bending her head over some interminable embroidery; Tom Yorke smoking and swinging lazily in his big American rocking-chair by the fire; Lusada probably, almost certainly, is there too; and Calla, that slim shadow crossing now must be hers.

Tramp, tramp—a policeman comes along on his nightly beat. He glances at Felix half suspiciously as he passes by. Felix smiles to himself, thinking that it is not at all improbable that he appears to strangers in the light of one cherishing felonious intentions. It is amusing, though it might under some circumstances be inconvenient, to be regarded as a possible burglar, and he prepares to obey the injunction that has *not* been given by the fast-disappearing guardian of the peace, and “move on.” He has not moved far, however, when the strains of martial music become audible, and a volunteer band, apparently returning from some festivity, and followed by a tail of small boys running at its back, and a sprinkling of street-stragglers on the pavement at its side, comes marching down the street, to the appropriate air of “See the Conquering Hero comes.”

Several windows open as this warlike melody clangs out brazen-throated along the hitherto quiet road, and the procession adds the illumination of its torches to the dull yellow glare of the street-lamps. Among these windows is the one on which Felix's attention has been fixed. Under cover of the passers-by who loiter on the pavement to watch the minstrel band, he draws near and looks, and so sees Calla, as she pushes the blind aside and leans forward to observe what is going on, and the light of the nearest gas-lamp on

the pavement streams on her face. In just her old careless freedom and the unconsciousness which is graceful because so naive and natural, she rests one arm upon the sill, and looks out leisurely, and then glances back at Lusada, who comes to her side, and pushes the window higher, and moves the blind more out of her way as he bends down to her and speaks in the free and familiar way of acknowledged affection.

Felix is in the deepest shadow of the porch columns—they are in the full light. The band is passing on out of sight, some of the passers-by are following it, some lingering to look back at it, one or two joining the string of stragglers in the rear. Lusada and Calla still linger at the open window, Felix still watches them.

She is all in black, he sees, and thinks with a thrill of painful pleasure it is probably for his loss she has put on mourning. But she is smiling as she plays with the jet chain round her neck, and glances up at Lusada, utterly unconscious that any eyes are fixed on her. She can see no one in the street who is not gaping after the band; she never dreams how clearly the lamp-light strikes on their two faces and photographs them on the sight of one who stands silent in the shadows. How lily-white she looks in the dead black of this dress! The slim fingers twined among the jet beads shine against them like snow. There is just a shade of pensiveness in her eyes, of tenderness in her smile. She is even more beautiful so than if her brightness were wholly unsoftened by a shadow.

And he—he looks a worthy mate for her, with his figure of an athlete, his tawny leonine locks, and sun-bronzed brow, his features somewhat stern in their massive grandeur, but lit up by the rare sweet smile that ever answers hers.

As one looking back into a lost Paradise, Felix looks on them. In the stern and utter renunciation of this gaze, which he means shall be the last he will fix on her till years shall have plucked the sting from the wound that tingles to-day, he all unconsciously sets the seal upon their futures.

"Come in out of the cold; this wind will chill you," Lusada says half tenderly, half authoritatively, putting his hand on her shoulder to draw her back. She protests with a sort of playful waywardness for a moment—then suddenly yields with the utmost docility, yields—Felix thinks—as if it were very sweet to her so to yield.

She moves back, out of the cold, into the warm lighted room, out of his sight, and leaves him in the dark, in the cold, alone, with the shadows closing round his spirit, and the cold wind seeming to chill his heart.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“LOYAL JE SERAI DURANT MA VIE.”

THE following day Isabel goes out early to pay a quiet visit to Calla; Mr. Darrell betakes himself to the city on business. Felix excuses himself from accompanying his sister to the Yorkes, on the ostensible ground that he too has business, being only in London for so few days, that must be attended to. First of all there are letters that must be written, then commissions that must be executed, interviews that must be appointed. He is just finishing his letters, when a visitor is announced—Mr. Lusada.

Felix is glad, and not at all surprised to see him. He knew well that directly Lusada heard he was in town, he would be with him. Lusada had received the news this morning, and here he is accordingly.

For a few moments after their greeting, Felix wonders whether his friend's eyes—those eagle eyes with their Indian acuteness that in the old days were ever first to descry the little cloud of dust on the border of the prairie—the stir that was a sign of danger in the tangle of the brushwood—had detected him last night as he stood in the shadows looking up at the lighted window. But Lusada had never even dreamt of his presence, neither had the dimmest idea dawned on Calla that he, seeing her unseen, was near.

Our sometimes “boasted instincts” tell us very little after all. Is it that the polish of our civilization rubs the edge off them—that they were keener in our savage days, when such intuitions, half animal, half spiritual, more necessary, reached a higher development? Nowadays we tell the story of any exceptional manifestation of these dormant instincts, when for once they wake and cry aloud in our souls, and pass over the powerlessness with which, as a rule, they fail to make their voices heard. Where one fitful boding tells us truly, a hundred times we brush close to the truth unknowing. Where once a pulse thrills unaccountably and strangely in the unknown presence of the beloved, a hundred times no electric current sweeps into our soul to tell us that the other “half of our perfect heart” is beating near.

Julius Lusada has heard, of course, of Mrs. Darrell's death; it was by letter from Felix that the news reached him, as the two friends never drop their correspondence for long, and the one is always made aware of the chief events that are happening to the other.

He does not say much; but his presence is a sympathetic one, and the two men understand each other thoroughly. A grasp of the

hand, a word of comradeship, says so much between man and man; they leave effusion and demonstration to women, whom it becomes well enough—except those rare ones who are dowered with the golden gift of the true sympathetic silence. There is a good deal of its imitation current, a cheap alloy of indifference or embarrassed distance, just washed with the colouring of the pure gold; the real thing is too pure and too highly refined ever to be otherwise than rare.

Lusada touches but lightly on the past, and turns at once to the future.

"Back to the battle-fields, eh?" he says. "That sounds tempting. I'd have half a mind to change my plans—only it would be rather late in the day. I am off to Egypt and the Holy Land to-morrow."

"Egypt—to-morrow?" Felix repeats, and adds, after a pause, inquiringly—"Alone?"

"Yes—that is, I meet Vaughan at Ostend, and join the Grahams in Italy. We shall strike down through Switzerland sharp, and make straight for Alexandria, I'll do the trip in a couple of months or so, I reckon, and get back to London. You see, Egypt and Palestine have got to be done, and this is a good time to do them, as I'm not likely to be here next winter."

"Going back?"

"Next fall I hope to be away in the South Sea Islands—not alone," he adds, an unconscious look of proud contentment betraying itself in his eye.

"She will enjoy the new life of the islands," observes Felix.

"Yes, it will be a fresh world to her, and lotos-eating will be sweet for a time," the other replies. Both of them evidently regard the mention of her name as superfluous. Will you come up there with me now?" Lusada continues, with apparent irrelevance, as the invitation is not meant to apply to the South Sea Isles, but is pointed by a vague jerk of the head in the direction where the abode of the Yorkes may be supposed to be.

"No, I think not, thanks. My sister is there. For my own part, I do not suppose I shall manage to pay them a visit this time—my stay in town is so short. You will say all that's to be said from me—to all."

"Yes," assents Lusada, in the brusque, unsmiling way which those who know him know holds not a touch of sternness, but merely means thoughtfulness. Then he adds suddenly, with his usual straightforward charging at a point as if to take any difficulty by storm—"You'll not see her, then?"

Felix pauses just a moment before he answers.

"No. It's best not, I think."

There is a silence, during which the two men look straight into

each other's souls. They are neither of them of the nature that doubts and questions, that gives half trust, and dares not count on more than half loyalty. For a moment Felix fancies he reads the question in Lusada's eyes, "Best for *whom*?" but the question is never answered, never uttered.

Lusada would never forgive a treachery, but he would never suspect one. He would pardon a fickleness never a falsehood. Be daring and frank, as he is himself, and his tolerance is limitless. For betrayal, for cowardice, he has no mercy; he would almost absolve one for not being true to him who dared to be true *with* him. But that those he trusts should ever deal otherwise than truly with him, he is himself too audaciously frank, too recklessly generous, to suspect. There is a great deal of the chivalry of the days of the Round Table in this western border-ranger. In Lancelot's place he might have erred as Lancelot, but had he reigned in place of the Blameless King, he probably would have looked on earth through the illusion of the lofty ideal, and built on the reeds of Guinevere's love and Lancelot's truth his rock-like faith, even as Arthur did.

Now he leaves the question in his heart unuttered; his eyes meet Felix's clear, loyal, answering gaze with no inquiry, only with a steady trust. In the mutual instinct of their manhood, they shrine Calla's name apart sacredly from all further allusion and discussion. Only after the brief silence, Lusada says quietly but earnestly,

"There's to be no break in our friendship, Felix—there could be none?"

"There could be none indeed. The links should be drawn closer than ever in the coming days. When you are married, it will hold fast and firm. But just now——"

They grasp hands, and not a word more is said or needed to be said on that subject.

"I leave town in a day or two," Felix observes, in a light, conversational tone. "My sister and Mr. Darrell stay here awhile."

"What route do you take?" asks Lusada.

"Dover to Calais, and push on to Versailles as fast as the pitfalls in my path will let me. Travelling is no joke there nowadays."

"No. Now, that's the kind of life that's *living*," Lusada rejoins half enviously. "I go from Dover too. The Yorkes go down with me to-morrow. Yorke has got some friends there, and is going to stay a few days. But I cross to Ostend, and so on to Switzerland."

They then talked of travelling plans and politics and the war as if no such thing as a woman existed.

Felix, as a partisan, was unsatisfactory, or at least, he would have seemed so to those partisans whose pride is that they can see but one side of the shield.

Fresh from France as he was, from the daily witnessing of her sorrows and her struggles, allied by the old ties of association and

affection to France, he yet could not be blind to the fact that she herself had forged the steel that struck to her own heart, and that in this household divided against itself, her own self-conflict tore her strength asunder. He gave freely its due of respect and admiration to the iron and immovable unity of the enemy's resistless force; and while too earnest a worshipper of true Liberty to be an upholder of the Empire, yet his personal sympathy lay with the dethroned sovereign.

Lusada looked on passing events with a good deal of the same spirit. Although his tendency was wholly and solely to the worship of Power, in whatever form, and for whatever cause; although his heroes of the great revolution were Mirabeau and the giant Danton, as representing physical force and the magnetism of personal power; although the strength that fights through the field to victory was his deity—he offered still deeper homage to that strength when stricken down. When a stately tree fell sapped, when a once ascendant strength sank down defeated by external and overwhelming forces, whether to the cause he was friend or foe, his instincts led him to sympathize with the chief. Born with the gift of leading, his spirit went ever with the leader; and with all the chivalry of his nature he stood forward now in sympathy with the fallen ruler—under whose power (even though its foundations were built deep in one day of bloodshed), the land he loved had seemed to thrive, had looked so fair and stately a growth in its prosperity and peace—none knew that canker was at the root—who, since he first grasped the imperial sceptre, swayed it ever mildly, true friend and stanch ally, till on him the ghost of a dead day, near twenty years past buried, rose in retribution at last.

While Lusada and Felix in their conversation on current topics apparently ignored Calla's existence, she and Isabel found themselves once more together after several months of separation. Calla was overflowing with a sympathy that she scarcely dared express. She had sincerely mourned Mrs. Darrell's death, had shed many bitter tears when the news reached her, had put aside all her pretty bright colours, and worn all outward signs of mourning as true tokens of a genuine grief. Now she wanted to take Isabel to her heart and tell her how truly she shared her sorrow; but she dared not.

We cannot approach the majesty of a grief too closely. Isabel seemed to Calla now something sacred and apart. She dared not lavish the old impulsive caresses and sympathies on this pale, silent girl, about whom there seemed to her fancy something shadowy and unearthly now, with her marble-white face, almost transparent in its delicacy, her dreamy, sapphire eyes, that were ever wandering and aspiring in a wild unrest.

For Isabel, she looked under Calla's genuine tenderness and

sympathetic grief, and saw her blooming youth, her bright future.

"We are dedicated to opposite goddesses, Calla, you and I," she said once, with her slow smile, that vaguely suggested something strange behind its sweetness. "Or at least, it seems so now. There's this difference in our lots—my goddess is always ready to receive those whom yours discards. But your bright goddess of Joy shuts her temple against us once vowed to Grief."

Calla would have liked to talk of Felix, or rather to make Isabel talk of him; but Isabel was perversely monosyllabic on the subject of her brother.

"He is coming to see us, I suppose?" Calla observed casually.

"No," replied Isabel incisively, "he is not."

"Will he leave London, then, without seeing us at all?" asked Calla, colouring a little.

"Yes—exactly so."

Conscious that Isabel was watching her with calm, sad, scrutinizing eyes, Calla raised her head and met the look steadily.

"He knows best," she said quite calmly and reliantly. "If he thinks it is best, it is best."

"You think so still?"

"Still and ever. We do not change our natures because our ways of life and relations to each other change."

"Nor change our faith, although we change our love?" questioned Isabel in her sweet, even voice.

Here a well-known step and voice in the hall announced Lusada's arrival, and Calla, murmuring a hasty word of excuse, vanished from the room. Outside of all natural eagerness, she felt some unexplained, but deep reluctance, to meeting him before Isabel. She flushed more with embarrassment than shyness as she re-entered the room with him. Under Isabel's eyes she was conscious of a vague uneasiness. In those meetings with Felix himself during the past summer, she had known no such embarrassment—perhaps because from the deepest feelings all things akin to embarrassment are exiled, perhaps because a woman's eyes are quickest to read a woman's heart.

Isabel extended her hand to Lusada with her grave, dreamy look and a faint smile. She looked so fair and fragile and delicate in her deep mourning; he held her hand and looked down on her with a kindly and admiring and yet most compassionate sympathy.

"I am glad to meet you again, Miss Isabel; but how frail and pale you are," he said according to his habit of speaking out his thoughts.

If Calla had been jealous every time Julius Lusada spoke softly to and gazed tenderly and deferentially at any other woman, she would have lived as the chronic prey of the green and yellow

monster. But fortunately for her own peace of mind she had not the faintest tendency to jealousy, nor had she the slightest cause, as it came as naturally as the breath of life to Lusada to fix on each and every fair face—no matter who, what, where, or when—a gaze that evidenced his appreciation of its fairness. Calla was calm and content in his presence, and to his look and smile she responded always instantly with a ready brightness, of which Isabel's soft watchful eyes made a note.

"Well, Isabel?" observed Felix interrogatively, when his sister returned to their temporary home. She answered the drift of the inquiry plainly and concisely at once.

"She looks very pretty and blooming; she seems in very good health and spirits."

"They are all well, I suppose?"

"Yes. She asked after you, and I told her that you were not going to see her," said Isabel quietly.

"And what did she say?"

"Do you want to know?"

"No," he answered somewhat abruptly. "I don't know why I asked you. I have no reason for wanting to pry into her thoughts and words."

"It was nothing much," responded Isabel. "She only said that you were always right, and that whatever you thought best was best now and ever. And then *he* came in, and she looked as if she thought *he* was always right."

"You judge her harshly, Bell; you seem to have no sympathy with her now that she—is happy."

"I don't judge her unjustly, I think, and I *have* sympathy for her, for I think the foundation on which the happiness is built is insecure."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"WHAT! GONE WITHOUT A WORD?"

If our mortal eyes could but pierce through the impenetrable shades, and reach the regions where the Daughters of Darkness sit weaving the web of Fate, not the least marvellous thing to note in the making of our destiny would be the material whereof it is woven. We should see that there is nothing in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, nothing, in our own natures, of divine or devilish that does not furnish the wherewithal for these spinners to work. From every mortal virtue, as from every passion and every crime, they draw the skeins to wind and weave.

If on the veiled faces of the three mystic sisters a smile may find a place, how grimly they must smile as they lay their hands alike on our love and on our truth, our frailty and our faith, and twist one and all to their allotted ends, and out of our highest aspirations, out of our struggles after the noblest, draw the threads to weave us the darkest destiny! Yet still, when the poisoned robe clings closest that dark Lachesis fitted for us, and Clotho spun from the tangle of the conflict of our inmost souls at her second sister's will, then "sudden the worst turns the best to the brave," and merciful Atropos cuts through the bonds that bind us down to the life where we are her sister's prey:

There is no tragic doom that blackens earth to which now and again its victims have not been dragged by fetters forged of their own faith, and riveted by their own self-sacrifice.

The many at whom the world laughs, who "meant for the best," but whose best intents miscarried, are not proven in mistake by failure. It falls too often that the *finis* of the noblest effort is the dreary utterance of the old Jacobite ballad, defiant in its despair, and strong in its defeat:

"Now all is done that man can do,
And all is done in vain."

Felix Grey, for one, meant for the best, and, as many a one has done before him, when he stood at the cross-roads, in a loyalty regardless of himself, for honour's sake and at duty's summoning, he set his foot on the narrow path that led him and others to an end he little guessed.

It is again a cool early autumn night in London; the waiter has asked if the gentleman in No. 8 would like a fire, but Felix has all his life been of hardy habit, and accustomed to variations of climate, and has declined the offered luxury. With its fireless grate and stiff furniture, and its pictureless walls, whose bareness is only broken by a bunch of garish paper flowers in a vase on the mantel-piece, the room looks dreary and unhomelike, as if it never had had, and probably never would have, a permanent occupant. Two tall candles, in still taller, gaunt, and ungraceful plated candlesticks, that seem to have overgrown themselves, are flickering on the table, and by their light Felix is reading a letter, or rather looking at it, with the fixed, vacant gaze of deep thought.

He does not need to read the written words again—he has re-read them a dozen times, and knows them by heart. They tell him nothing new, nothing important, only they are in Calla's well-known clear womanly hand. It is only a brief, friendly letter, scarcely more than a note, and supposed to be written by her merely as a representative of the Yorke family, to say that they are at Dover; they have that day seen Julius Lusada off on the first stage of his journey to Egypt; they remain at Dover a few days,

and as they hear that Felix intends returning by that route, they hope he will come and see them on his way, and at least take a quiet dinner with them all, even, if he cannot stay a day or two. It lays stress upon the fact that "papa" will be glad to see him, but gives no information as to the writer's own sentiments, and is signed, "Your affectionate friend and sister."

Felix smiles sadly as his eyes rest on that last word—"sister." He remembers when they two last stood face to face, with impassable barriers between them—divided, above all, by the towering truth that he who was absent trusted them—how even then all the power and the passion of the past poured down upon them and shook them with the storm of memory, and the severed force of their divided faith struggled against itself, until at last from the might of a loyalty that after its one wavering seized upon its post again, and stood more fast and firm than ever—of a love that towered high enough to trample its own weakness down into its slave, they gathered strength to face their final farewell.

In that last farewell they had been strong, and by that farewell they must stand.

His sister! Poor child, he thought, it is too soon and too late for that!

He read between the lines of her letter, he knew, though not a word of condolence was there, that with all her warm and loving heart she was longing to say some word of sympathy to him, yet that she looked upon his loss with too tender a reverence to put her feelings into written words, in which indeed, as a rule, all attempt at condolence or comfort seems but

"Common-place,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain."

She longed to know how he had borne, how he had been affected by, the loss of the mother who—even though he had not been her favourite child—had been ever a tender mother to him; she yearned to tell him how truly she shared his grief, how during all the years of her girlhood she had held *his* mother only less dear than the memory of her own. And he knew her well enough to guess that such must be the tenor of her feelings.

But of this invitation he would not avail himself. It was tempting enough, too tempting. Just because it looked so alluring, so innocent, so sweet and simple and harmless a pleasure, he took warning, and resolved to hold aloof. True, it was only in the easy and unforced and natural course of events, that he should pay this visit to the family whom he counted among his closest friends. It might pass off as lightly, pleasantly, and simply as those days at Godwyn Grange had passed. But the train of thought and memory that arose from the very name of Godwyn was one that fixed him in the resolution he was forming.

If he went to her now, he would see her in Lusada's absence, see her, knowing in his heart that between them now her betrothal to that absent one was the only valid bar, knowing that in this case the influence of presence would wax powerful as that of absence waned—nay, to face all the truth, knowing more than this, knowing that over the passionate fidelity of the deep under-currents of her nature—no matter how the surface waves swelled in their ebb and flow—the sway of the past must endure. The tide might rise and retreat as the moon waxed and waned; the depths beneath the wave currents were moveless.

He knew by sure instinct, and a strange insight into her nature, that it seemed he had only learned since he had lost her, that his power over her lasted in all its pristine force. Let him only exert his influence—let him even only allow himself to be passively led by impulses far from evil, and leave his influence so as to do its own work, and she would be as utterly and helplessly under his sway now as on the day when she yielded her full love to him, and laid down all her soul selfless and lost in his.

Had she ever failed to obey his wish, whether he bade her suffer or rejoice? He could not but know that over a nature such as he now knew hers to be, the old first influence must still retain its power for good or evil; he caught even a distant glimmering of the truth to which he had been blind, that when they were parted, it was only to *his* friend that her heart turned, only of *his* hero that she made her second idol. Feeling as he did, could he venture to see her now that Lusada was far away?

If he had been blinder—if he had felt a less certain conviction of the innate fidelity—(it might be morbid, irrational, but he could only see that it sprang from the root of strength and truth), of the nature that superficially was so impetuous and impressionable—if, above all, he had loved her less, he might have decided otherwise. But he loved her so dearly.

Even now, far on in this nineteenth century, the great secret mainspring of human nature works unruined in its eternal grooves; still the old and oft-told tale enacts itself again and again around us in our daily life; still even yet hearts burn and break with the old, old love—the double yearning of mortal heart and immortal soul.

There is a so-called love, born of the imagination, and by the imagination that bore it raised into a deity; it is fair and pure and poetic, but yet it is but a false god, this love which demands artistic perfection for the breath of its feeble life, which lives upon joy and beauty and youth, and smiles in the satisfaction of a dainty and delicate fancy, which jars with grief and shrinks from pain, and closes its sensitive ears against the discord of human suffering, which thrives on hours of poetic sadness almost as well as on those

of romantic joy, and which, though it may abide faithfully through a picturesque moonlight effect of storm, retreats shuddering from realistic calamity too bare and ugly and earthly for it to idealize.

But these pale shadows, that call themselves Love, melt away into the air whereof they were fashioned when the true God speaks.

This true love, that lives still, and for which still here and there a heart will count the world well lost, is mighty alike in the moral and the physical world. Before terror, shame, and pain, it does not turn away; in the face of the ghastly and realistic horrors of the fire, the wreck, the ambulance, and the battle-field, it does not quail; it stands faithful when the "painted veil" of the ideal is torn aside, and fears not to look on the rugged and scarred features of bare humanity in all their mingled beauty and repulsiveness.

Nobler still, the true power is powerful even to rise above the temptations of its own strength, strong enough to sacrifice itself.

This is the love that moves the world. It was this love that swayed Felix till he felt his faith lay in the balance of one day's decision, and alone with this love, in all its strength and weakness, he fought his last great battle now.

The silence of the great city's nightly sleep has not yet settled down. Still there is an occasional stir of cheerful common life. Now and then wheels rattle along the street—the last drops of the day-storm of traffic. Now there is the noise of a distant door shutting, then the sound of people talking in the street comes up to the window, and clear above the confused murmur breaks out perhaps a laugh, an oath, a loud "Good-night" called to some passing friend.

Life is going on all around him, and in the stillness of his solitary room every little sound strikes distinctly on his ear—he is silent in a sort of strained fixity of attention, and seems to listen, and yet he hears them not. He is moveless and impenetrable as if he were turned to marble, in this intensity of thought and nerve, while he wrestles out the last question with himself, and tramples down the temptation that tugs at his heart, and pleads that there is no reason why before he plunges back into the rough, roving, hard-working life that awaits him, he should not see her once more.

To see her once more—only that. Yet it means to look into those eyes that are as the twin-lode stars of her life, to meet those loveliest of eyes brim-full of true and tender and half-timid sympathy. It means to see the smile flash over her face in answer to his smile, and the sweet lips settle into a mournful earnestness when the moment of parting comes again. It means to be by her side when Julius Lusada is far away, by her side, knowing that she loved him first, that when he separated himself from her he sacrificed himself all needlessly and in vain, feeling in every pulse of his heart that even as he loved her from the first he must love her to the last.

Meaning all this, it means danger.

That danger he will not risk. Lusada trusts him, has left him in free and loyal faith. He will be worthy of that faith. In letter and in spirit, in look and deed and word, even to the uttermost, he will be true to his mother's trust, true to his own honour.

He takes her letter up and kisses it. Kissing the words her hand has traced is a mere piece of sentiment, but at such moments of their lives even strong and sensible and practical men commit strange follies.

"No, darling, no, my darling," he whispers to the senseless paper in a waste of passionate tenderness. "Never again. You will think me unkind, but it is better so. With my own free will I will never see you again; I swear I never will, until you are his wife."

On a sudden impulse, rare in him, an outbreak of the blind destructive instinct—(which survives to remind us in our hour of sharpest pain that the animal and the savage, though subordinated, is not dead in us)—he tears the paper almost fiercely into a hundred fragments. When he has done this he cools down suddenly, and looks on the torn atoms regretfully. It is surprising how such a little thing can give such pain.

"But little bees have bitter stings."

He feels as if he had torn up a last living hope by the roots out of his heart.

"There, it's all over now," he says to himself, as if some painful operation were just over, and released from the tranced strain of the struggle, he comes back to the consciousness of common life.

He looks at the clock. "How late it is!" The street is silent now; only a dog is howling in the distance. What a weird, wailing sound!—it makes night hideous. Nearer at hand a door bangs; some one is pulling about a box overhead; a step comes along the passage; the "boots" is probably collecting his charges from outside the doors. Felix returns to practical considerations, and flings open his door to give the man an order.

"Call me in time for the early Dover train to-morrow."

By the next morning's express accordingly Felix travels to Dover.

It is the train that meets the boat; he will pass straight from the platform to the deck; he has sent no line nor message to the Yorkes, but will write to them from France. When he alights at Dover he looks along the platform; he cannot tell himself whether it is the thrill of hope or fear with which he wonders whether each tall, slight, dark-haired girl, of whom he catches a passing glimpse in the crowd is she.

"But she is not here. What should she be doing here among the hurrying, pushing swarm of passengers on the platform? The only

voice that hails him, and the only face he knows, belongs to a bachelor friend, who greets him with "hail-fellow-and-well-met" surprise, and who is bound for the coasts of France on an errand not altogether unsimilar to his own.

Now they have passed down the gangway; they are on the deck. There is no great crowd of voyagers pressing to cross the Channel now, but there is the usual row of visitors along the pier, on their daily amusement bent, leaning over the railings to watch the passengers file down the narrow way, and scatter themselves over the deck, and the luggage shower down the shoot crashingly, at the risk of considerable damage to itself, listening to the Babel buzz that is in literal truth a confusion of tongues, and altogether enjoying the mild excitement which seems to all seaport *habitues* to become an after-breakfast necessity of "seeing off" the boat.

The bachelor friend recognizes some one on the pier, and waves his hand gaily. Felix looks along the line, and sees no familiar face.

Now the passengers are all on board, the last of the luggage has crashed down on deck; and there is a stentorian shout of "All for the shore!" A little bell rings in a falsetto key; a shrill whistle follows it up with an ear-piercing shriek; the gangway is withdrawn, and with a heavy splash the loosened ropes fall into the river.

Some instinct, he knows not what, for he hears no voice call him, draws Felix to turn suddenly, and cast one last look along the pier. And there he sees Calla. She has just arrived upon the scene, just made her way to the front rank of those who are leaning over the rails. Searching over the deck with a quick and eager glance, she too recognizes him. And so, as the steamer swings away from the pier, their eyes meet.

They look at each other across the narrow strip of sea, so near each other; each can read the look upon the other's face. But that narrow gulf widens and widens; the green waves bubble and boil up between them, as the revolving paddle churns the water into foam.

In that last look their souls meet, wedded in one wild longing and regret. Yet for a moment they are scarcely conscious that this longing is pain; they are so lost to all past, present, and future, in the single sense of each other's presence. But swifter and swifter the boat swings away; how quickly wider the green gulf yawns! and higher the waves splash up and surge against the steamer's sides! Their faces are fading from each other's sight; and over both these sweeps an icy desolation of irrevocable severance.

Felix's friend coming to his side to offer some cheerful comment as to the unpromising prospect of the voyage, and point out some high waves at sea, finds him absorbed in hurriedly adjusting a

field glass to his eye, and following the direction thereof, thinks it well to discreetly hold aloof a little longer.

The glass brings Calla near to Felix again, though she is losing now all sight of him. He sees her look of vain longing and regret; he sees the tears of bitter disappointment brim over her eyes. He can see her no longer; the picture is blurred and blotted; the glass is strangely dim.

It is thus that they look their last upon each other, with no syllable spoken to break the spell of the silence that has lasted between them since that summer morning, only a brief season ago, when hand in hand they faced the truth and took their true farewell.

BOOK IX.

THE LAND OF THE LEAL.

"As the first sound of flooded hill-waters
Is heard by people of the meadow-grass
Or ever a wandering waif of ruin pass
With whirling stones and foam of the brown stream,
Flaked with fierce yellow; so, beholding him,
She felt, before tears came, her eyelids wet."

SWINBURNE.

CHAPTER XXX.

"O DEATH IN LIFE! THE DAYS THAT ARE NO MORE!"

Mr. DARRELL and Isabel only remained in London for a few days after the Yorkes' return from Dover; but during that brief time Calla and Isabel were of course a great deal together. Mr. Darrell regarded it as the best and most natural thing that Isabel, alone in a strange city with him, solitary and sad in these early days of mourning, without a friend or companion, with scarcely even an acquaintance in England, save the Yorkes, should spend most of her time, while he was about on business, with Calla, instead of brooding alone; and the Yorkes made her ever warmly welcome.

Yet somehow it seemed now that the relations of the two girls were undefinably altered. They met with the usual expressions of affection; there was no change obvious in either of their manners—nothing definite whereby either could have accused the other of estrangement or coldness; and yet some change between them there was, and the only thing certain is that it had not originated with Calla. If into the old free loving familiarity there seemed to have crept a restraint, if across the once perfect, tender, limitless confidence there seemed to have drifted a thin veil that hid their souls from each other, it was not Calla's fault, and was to her a perplexity and a pain. The change in her friend was so subtle and intangible, she could scarcely have described or explained it; only neither meeting and parting kisses, however cordial, nor conversation, however friendly, seemed to bloom aside even for a moment the light, chill veil that had fallen between their hearts.

When last these two had parted, at the Château de la Basse-Rive, Calla's happiness in Lusada's love was a new and uncertain thing—the glimmering dawn of a day that might prove storm or sunshine. Now the morning was settled fair and calm; Calla was openly and avowedly happy; there seemed no cloud upon the bright horizon of her future: her pain was of the past, and if there lurked a little secret shadow in her heart it was a hidden one. Now Isabel looked on Calla's life and her own. Into her dreamy, introspective, and fanciful nature, affectionate, but ever strange and capricious even in her demonstrations of affection, a drop of bitterness seemed to have been poured. Sorrow had not melted her into clinging love and need of sympathy—in her sorrow she shut herself apart.

Calla felt, with a sadness that cost her a tear sometimes, that Isabel was far away from her now, far beyond any influence of hers; they might sit side by side, and hand in hand, but she could never reach Isabel, alone down in the depths of her great grief.

Sometimes she fancied that Isabel in fraternal loyalty resented the brightness of her prospects in this second betrothal, and the cheerful view which every one around appeared to take of her future, as though she had no past.

Isabel, however, still seemed always to take a great interest in her friend's affairs, asked many questions about her plans and prospects, and admired the great half-hoop diamond engagement ring that glittered on her finger.

She watched Calla folding up Lusada's latest letter and putting it away in her desk.

"You keep all your treasures there, I suppose?" she observed.

"Yes," admitted Calla.

"How many of them you must be amassing! And how long is he going to stay away?"

"About all the winter, I fancy. You see he has to 'do' Egypt tolerably thoroughly while he is about it. But we expect him back before the spring."

"Ah, yes; though I should not imagine," suggested Isabel sweetly, "that he was of the class of men whose principal part in life is to realize people's expectations."

"No, it is not his specialty, certainly," agreed Calla lightly; "but let us hope he will realize this one."

"And when he comes back, you'll be married, I suppose," pursued Isabel.

"Perhaps some time in the spring, or early summer—that is the present plan, at least."

"And do you really think you will be happy, Calla?" Isabel asked, with seriously attentive eyes.

"I think so," the girl replied softly and steadily. "Why not?"

"So you thought when you were going to marry Felix," observed

Isabel, in smooth, gentle tones, but with an incisiveness as cutting and cruel as a stroke from the talons of a tiger's beautiful velvet paw.

Calla had always dealt tenderly and forbearingly with Isabel, had in some measure yielded to her all their lives, and was more than ever patient with her now. She could almost as easily have struck a child as have spoken a harsh or hasty word to Felix's sister now that she was in mourning for the mother who had so idolized her. So although the colour blazed up crimson on Calla's cheek, there was neither resentment nor defiance in her tone, and if a shade of reproach for the unprovoked attack betrayed itself, it was most involuntarily, as she answered, lifting her head and meeting Isabel's look unflinchingly,

"Yes I did hope once before that I might know another happiness. I hoped and prayed, I think you know how sincerely; but that hope was buried long ago, and now I have learned to hope again."

"Yes," assented Isabel, "that's quite natural. But still 'there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.' I would not make *too* sure of this second sweet draught if I were you. It might be spilt like the first, you know—might it not?" she added, fixing her strange soft sapphire eyes, with their peculiar uncertain gleam, on Calla's face. Receiving no answer, she continued quietly—"Egypt is a long way off—suppose he never comes back?"

"Then I must bear it as best I may," replied Calla quietly too, but very nearly at the end of her patience. "And why do you suggest these possibilities to me, Isabel? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. There are enough real troubles in life without our distressing ourselves about the imaginary ones that *may be*."

"Certainly," Isabel agreed, with unruffled serenity; "and you must not mind what I say, Calla. You know I always speak my fancies, and I had no idea that you were *nervous*. You *used* not to be."

Calla was the last girl in the world to be justly accused of nervousness. She was not, as a rule, in the least degree superstitious or fanciful; yet now she did feel a chill sense of some vague foreboding tightening at her heart. Isabel's words seemed to her ominous. She shook off the feeling, and despised it and defied it; but for all that, the cold shadow of a presentiment touched her in that hour.

Their conversation was interrupted at this point, to her great relief. She could not, however, forget Isabel's strange words and manner; it seemed to her that they two could never more come together heart and soul in the old intimacy again, and the difference was all the more marked because she began to realize that it was chiefly to *her* that Isabel was changed.

The truth was, that to all others Isabel was masked and veiled in

impenetrable reserve, and only to Calla revealed now and then a glimpse of her real self. In her heart it is probable that she was really fond of her girlhood's only friend and companion still; a great deal of the regard of the old friendship lingered, even if its sweetness and confidence had died out. As if she was conscious of having behaved strangely, there was a flash of that old affection in her manner to Calla as she kissed her and bade her good-night that evening, and said, "Come and see me to-morrow; it is my last day in London, and I shall be all alone." But even in the kiss and the light caress at parting, there seemed to Calla to be something panther-like. Perhaps she was in a fanciful mood that day.

On the morrow she found Isabel apparently in quite another frame of mind—silent and dreamy and abstracted at first, and then seeming to come back to the world, and looking at Calla with sorrowful, earnest eyes, that seemed to seek and wonder.

"Will you come down and spend a week with me in the country when we are settled?" Isabel asked, as they discussed their mutual plans.

"Of course I will, dear," the other replied cordially; it would take more than an unkind word to shake her loyal tenderness to the old ties.

"That will be good of you," Isabel said, and for the first time Calla thought she was like her old self again, sad, but not harsh or embittered, as she continued, with a touch of the confidential tone she had dropped of late. "It won't be very cheerful for you, I know, and I am never in the same mood from one hour to another, but I shall be glad if you will come. You will keep me awake and in real life. I am always dreaming now. Dreams haunt me all day—real things seem to glide away from me like ghosts, and leave me in a dream."

"Do you know, Calla," she added presently, "I have such a queer dream about you. Not a day dream, you know, a real sleeping vision. I have it over and over again, and it is always the same—until last night."

"What is it dear?" asked Calla, imprudent in her curiosity, as Eve's daughters will be.

"I see you and Julius Lusada walking together," said Isabel, leaning her head on her hand, and looking into the fire as if she saw the vision there. "Sometimes it is in one kind of landscape, sometimes in another—forest, or sea shore, or desert—but always you two, and always behind you, and following you wherever you turn, there is a little black imp."

"A black imp?" repeated Calla half laughing, half curious.

"Yes," said Isabel, without the faintest smile. "I have often dreamt it, and always the same. It follows you close as your shadow, and seems to be mopping and mowing and mocking at you;

and you are so unconscious of it, you and he! It is not a pleasant dream."

"No," agreed Calla, with an uncomfortable sensation chilling her interest.

"And last night it went on further," continued Isabel, in the same pensive, pondering way. "There is more of it than I could follow before the curtain came down—for it always ends in a darkness coming over it and shutting it from my sight. You were passing up the aisle of a great church to the altar, you two; you were in a white bridal dress and veil, and there was music playing, but still behind you there crawled this horrible little black creature, and his eyes were glittering so fiendishly, like coals of fire."

Isabel paused.

"Well," said Calla, in a voice a trifle lower and less firm than usual, "and was that all?"

"No. Then it came upon me suddenly that what I had at first thought was bridal music playing was a deep bell tolling—or else it changed to that, I don't know which. And before the altar there was a coffin covered with a great black pall, and it—the creature that followed you—pulled your dress, and pointed its black finger there. And you started and clung closer to *his* arm; but you both kept on towards the altar still. There you lifted up the pall and looked down into the coffin—and I felt there was some horror coming, and I tried to call you away, to pull you back; but I could not utter a sound—I could not get at you to touch you. Then I heard you scream—and the darkness came down upon me—and that shriek of yours seemed to be ringing louder and louder in my ears as I went down into depths of darkness—till I woke." She shivered a little, and Calla, whose hand was touching hers, felt that she was cold as ice.

"It was a nightmare," Calla said, but rather faintly, and looking very pale, as the recollection forced itself upon her, of how often she had heard Isabel gravely say that she was "a true dreamer."

She had always laughed at such ideas, but she was unaccountably influenced by Isabel now.

"What they call a nightmare, perhaps. But I think dreamland is real—why should it not be? I know that many stranger things than dreamland are real. All night now my mother sits by my bedside. People would think that strange."

"It is not strange, dear, that we should dream of those we love," said Calla, softly turning her eyes away lest they should betray her thought.

"But it is not a dream," said Isabel shaking her head. After a silence she added suddenly, "I did not mean to tell you that, Calla. It belongs to me alone. I don't know what made me let it slip to you. I had determined to get out of the habit of telling

you my thoughts. I like to keep them to myself. Please never mention what I said just now."

"No, darling, I never will," Calla said tenderly and sadly.

An hour afterwards she and Isabel said good-bye.

"Write to me," Isabel said. "I shall watch to know what that dream of mine meant, and whether it is likely to come—false."

"And you will write to me, Bell?"

"Yes, just short letters to tell you we are well—if we *are* well. And if not—ill news flies apace. But *burn* my letters, Calla, always, if I get, writing about *myself*."

So they parted, on that last day falling back into something like their old friendship again; and so from these pages Isabel passes, to be seen no more. It is not her story, but Calla's, that I am telling. Isabel's story is one that may be told hereafter, but not now, nor here.

She leaves two thorns in Calla's pillow—the one is a fear, which she breathes to no living creature, that more sorrow is in store for Felix, that the curse which overhangs the fated family of the Greys may claim another victim yet, and that he may have cause to mourn his sister's life even more deeply than his mother's death; the other is a less unselfish, a morbid and unreasonable thought, a haunting, secret dread (of which weakness she is herself heartily ashamed), that Isabel's words to her were ominous and boded evil. She is angry with herself, being, as a rule, singularly free from superstition, for allowing this fanciful fear to disturb her peace; but still it weighs upon her, and causes her a constant craving for news from Julius Lusada, for assurances that he is safe and well.

Yet somehow in the eagerness with which she watches for his letters—frequent and warm and true-lover's letters as they are—still she never forgets for a day to look for news of Felix, as he roves from point to point of the devastated land in whose fair sunshine they have spent so many bright and pleasant days, and round whose very heart now the ring of the armies of united Germany is tightening closer and closer. In spite of her occasional indignation with this general, or that regiment, or those authorities, Calla clings always in love and sympathy to the once sunny land of France.

Felix Grey, on the whole, is leading a less perilous life than her lively imagination pictures, and is really running no very great risk of falling by a random shot; while the chances of Julius Lusada's standing any immediate danger of being drowned in the Nile are decidedly small. Still both their positions appear precarious to Calla; and she watches uneasily day by day with divided anxiety for news of both. Perhaps the fact that she hears often from Lusada, and never *from*, and not very much *of* Felix, stimulates her anxiety about the latter. Anyhow, whenever reassured by a high-spirited, happy, and hopeful letter from Lusada, that her fears for

him are foolish and fanciful, she generally, in her after-thoughts of another, feels a sting of the old unreasonable self-reproach. The unexorcised demon will still whisper in her ear, "What right have *you* to hope to be happy?—*you* to count on a bright future?—while *he* is hopeless, sad, and alone, and bade you think of him 'always as happy' only to spare *you* pain?"

On Christmas Day, when Mr. Yorke, at dinner, called for a bumper to the health of "absent friends!" and a sympathetic smile on everybody's face showed that they mentally dedicated the toast to the successful lover who should be nameless, to spare Calla's blushes, Calla did not blush. And she stifled a much deeper sigh than was at all necessary, or called for by the occasion, as she secretly wondered how Felix was spending *his* Christmas Day, and whether melancholy memories were painfully present to him.

Felix was, as it happened, sitting down to a sufficiently good dinner, with a couple of kindred souls, fellow-correspondents and compatriots, at a restaurant in Versailles, quite safe and comfortable, and out of reach of shot and shell. Outside the walls of Paris, a dinner, if you like to pay for it, was quite a possibility, and at present there was not the slightest need to fatten the Christmas cat.

The new year came—that year which dawned so tragically upon France in her hopeless struggle, dashing the vain waves of her divided forces against the rock-like power of the enemy, relentless in their unity, resistless in the alliance of their concentrated strength ---that year whose birth so many thousands welcomed with awful anxiety as to what changes might hap before it had run its course. It dawned on Felix, who was off on a literary foraging expedition, very cold and rather hungry, taking notes in a battered pocket-book, in a sequestered corner uncomfortably near the shells of Mont Valérien, but well satisfied with himself for having contrived to edge himself so far as where the foot of correspondents rarely trod.

It dawned on Julius Lusada, enjoying a social quartette with three bachelor friends on the deck of a dahabeah off Thebes, under the great Oriental stars that gleamed as large as moons through the palm-trees. It dawned on Calla, alone in her room, standing on a chair and wrestling somewhat impatiently with the rusty hasp at the top of the high half-window, which only consented to creak back on its hinge as Big Ben boomed out the last stroke of midnight. Then she leant out upon the sill, regardless of the icy night-air, and listened to the bells that seemed, all over the great silent city, to clash out together at once in a wild glad peal of welcome, and looked up at the cold bright twinkling stars, that on the Nile were beaming down so large and mellow and lustrous, and thought of both the absent ones.

She was all alone—her father was out at a merrymaking, her aunt had been an hour in bed and asleep. She leant there lost in

thought, listening to the voices of a company of carol-singers dying away in the distance along the street below. How sweet it sounded, yet how sadly the last notes died away. She felt an undefinable sense of loneliness and foreboding weigh upon her as she welcomed this new year alone.

The old year that was gone had found her regretful, mourning "a fair hope dead," but not despairing blindly over its grave. It had brought her new comfort, new hope, new love, this good old year! What if it had brought back to her too the resurrection of the past?—what even though it left her now a prey to sad and strange unrest? It had given her good gifts, and she sorrowed to see it go. What gifts did this new-born year bear for her?—how would it leave her when it too had run its course.

If all went well, and all their hopes were realized on next New Year's Eve she should watch this now opening year die out among the unknown glories of tropical moonlight, and from the lotus-eating languor of the South Sea Islands.

"Where a life is love, and love is a dream,"

with beauty hitherto undreamt of around her, resting in the earthly paradise of love and delight that he who would lead her through its gates had pictured forth to her so many times, she would look back to a past that should pale and wane in the light of that present as those cold distant stars beside a tropical moon.

This was Calla's castle in the air, built up on Julius Lusada's plan of architecture. Would the coming year realize it? Would she be able so entirely to leave her past behind, and in a new hemisphere lead a new life?

She sighed as she looked back through the changing seasons of the dead old year, and looking up at the chill, bright wintry sky, she prayed that the new year might bring her lover back safe to her side, and guard and shield from all harm her brother and her friend, wherever his path might lie.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"COME VEDI, ANCOR NON M'ABBANDONA!"

WHEN the year was barely two months old, one of the prayers which Calla had offered on its shrine in its opening hour was fulfilled, one dim fear which had clouded her welcome of it was annihilated. Julius Lusada, having finished up his tour with a rapid run through the Holy Land, came back to London, safe, sound and prosperous. He took care that his return should not fall upon his

beloved as an unexpected blessing; he appeared to have a habit of heralding his arrival by telegrams from each and all of the last few stages of his journey—a manifestation of affection and eagerness which was certainly flattering, although a trifle agitating to the nerves. Calla used to tear open the flimsy yellow envelopes with a flutter of anxiety, to be relieved with some such message as, “Detained at Southampton, come on by 12.30 train.”

Even to the very hour of his arrival she watched and waited for him with a certain sense of insecurity, unable to banish from her mind Isabel's warning words, and the old adage anent the cup and lip, unable altogether to shake herself free from fancies that a malignant fate might yet hurl the train by which he travelled to destruction or precipitate his hansom cab into collision with a Pickford's van or a block on London Bridge. But Fate did none of these things, and when he had returned to her, and his voice called her by name again, all her shadowy presentiments vanished away into thin air.

There was small doubt that Lusada had been enjoying his pleasure-trip heartily, in spite of his being absent from his betrothed; but there was absolutely no shadow of room for doubt as to his delight in seeing her again.

The joy of meeting is scarcely ever in the actual moment of reunion; that moment of transition from suspense to welcome strikes too suddenly and sharply for pure joy. The sudden exaltation from the vigilant anxiety that weighs upon you like pain, to the pinnacle of attainment, makes you dizzy. It is when that vertigo of the moment is passed, and we steady ourselves on the great heights of our joy, that we realize its perfection.

So not until she and Lusada sat side by side in the silence that succeeds the incoherence of meeting, did Calla fully realize the intense relief and joy of this union.

If in his absence, in spite of all her late anxiety for his return, his influence over her had sometimes seemed to lose its strength, in his presence it returned with undiminished force, and cast the old spell over her, body and soul, again.

It was a curious difference in Calla's feelings towards those two men whom she had loved, that in Julius Lusada's absence the glamour he had cast over her often faded somewhat, and in his presence reasserted itself, powerful as ever. Whereas Felix Grey, in absence and presence alike, held ever the same influence over her; and she referred in thought to his probable opinion when he was far away, as simply and naturally as she would have consulted him were he by her side. It was probable that to the end of her life, she would as loyally defer to every opinion of Felix's, as obey every wish of Lusada's.

But if during the absence of both her spirit was turned often to

Felix, calmly, dreamily, with a vague inexplicable instinct of affinity, now when Lusada returns to her, and with all the love and joy of reunion shining in his glad smile, seeks a response so triumphantly and confidently from her, he meets that full response which he desires. Her colour comes and goes as rapidly, her lips quiver into as lovely and half tremulous a smile as if his sway had ever been supreme.

A great deal of the seeming inconstancy and fickleness in this world, if its history were truly traced, would be discovered to spring only from the root of a fidelity that lies so deep that surface passions and emotions come and go without ever striking down to it. The offspring of this too often disastrous constancy bear frequently the form of fickle fancy or wandering caprice. True, it was not in this case such a mere passing fancy which attached Calla to her second love, but none the less was hers, through her very fidelity, a divided faith. Between this love and its predecessor, there was ever an unseen, unknown, and often even unconscious strife—the conflict between the inner life, where the past exists as the present and a possible future lives as an idealized past, and the external life which lives in contact with the material world, which demands in its healthy and buoyant youth to breathe the earthly air of hope and joy, and cannot exist in the rarified atmosphere of memories and ideals. This strife between soul and temperament has many fields of fight—its unseen struggle rends many an unknown human heart, makes or mars many an obscure life, it is the secret of many a flash of the genius that from such conflict bursts into flame and shines a beacon light; more than this it holds the balanced forces of the whole world, eternally swaying and struggling in the battle between the spiritual and the material.

The same conflict which fills that vast field is taking place on a small scale in a thousand separate hearts. It holds Calla's in a state of chronic division, of which, however, she is at this hour unconscious, while rejoicing in the return of the lover who represents to her the present and the future and all the external world.

His noble figure and face strike her anew, as would the contemplation of a splendid piece of sculpture or painting. She gazes at him with a mingling of pride and happiness, with a sweet tremulous shyness that would draw her to avert her look from him, but that the still stronger force of his influence compels her eyes to answer his. And he gazes at her with that unutterably tender smile which ever to *her* softens the stern outline of his features, with a slow colour rising in his sunburnt cheek, as if from the beautiful, blushing speaking face, his eyes were drinking their first and last deep draught of beauty.

"And now, with what fellows have you been flirting with since I have away?" he asks half abruptly.

"Why, none. I am not a flirt," she says, with a soft smile.

"Don't look so lovely while you tell me so, or I can't believe it. Yet tell me so again, for it's sweet to hear."

"Well, how am I to tell you without looking at you?" she says laughing and blushing.

He finds that difficulty easy enough to solve. He draws her to his side, so that her cheek rests against his shoulder, and her down-cast face is hidden from his view. "Now tell me," he says, "that while I have been out of sight, I have not been out of mind?"

"My letters told you that; and rung a great many changes on the assurance, too."

"And you really have not let any fellows come making love to you?"

"No. Why *will* you think I have? It's not my way at all."

"Seems so odd they can keep away," he observes meditatively. "I couldn't. One would think they would at least try their luck, even if they couldn't go in and win."

"Others have better taste, you see."

"Or cooler heads."

"Now I don't ask whom *you* have been flirting with," she observes a little interrogatively.

"Nobody you would care to hear about," he replies carelessly.

"Then you *have* been flirting?"

He appears in no way annoyed by the inference—indeed a smile that seems more of gladness than amusement overspreads his face.

"Little girls should not be jealous," he observes brightly.

"I am not," she replies softly and confidently, raising her eyes to his.

It is rather cruel of her to take away from him the satisfaction he appeared singularly enough to derive from the possibility of her jealousy. But even if the disappointment had been greater, it would have been more than compensated by her tenderly trusting look and tone. His half amused smile melts into a graver gentleness.

"No, you need never be. My lily, my pure little darling, who shall I ever find like *you*?"

People seem to have a wonderful inclination for likening Calla to a lily. It is an apt *simile* enough, inasmuch as she is tall and of a clear white complexion and graceful presence; and about her too there is the charm of a certain frank purity. But it would seem that in her general nature and character and expression she is much more like a rose—a warm white summer rose, in the fulness of its fragrant bloom, with the deep soft blush at its creamy heart. There is a Southern softness about her that does not seem to belong to the cold, white, marble-leaved lily.

She is happy and light of heart this day in his return. In his

presence morbid fancies fly. His strength has that magnetic and sympathetic quality which communicates itself to others. Near to that steady strength, of which every pulse beats full of exuberant life and power, Calla feels far away from all misfortune. She has a sense of safety and shelter by his side; she forgets, as utterly as if they had never been, her fanciful fears and forebodings; they are sponged out of her mind and effaced like words rubbed off a slate, to-day.

Meanwhile, at this time of their reunion, while they for the hour are forgetful of all the world beside, across the Channel stirring scenes are passing—the city of Paris, which has stood so long at bay, has fallen at last.

In the Place de la Concorde, on that first of March, the morning sun glinted on the ranks of the Prussian bayonets, bright and unstained, as they marched through the conquered city. The conquerors were merciful, however, and in two days they turned their backs on silent, fallen, vanquished Paris, and tossed their helmets in the air with shouts of rejoicing as they set their faces toward the Fatherland.

The tide that poured into Paris when the gates were opened bore Felix Grey with it. But the back-wave, when the Germans retreated, left him there. He intended to remain until he had explored every nook and corner of the lately besieged city, that knew not then how soon it was yet to undergo a yet more tragical siege. When the first blows of the Commune were struck, and in the murder of the veteran generals Lecointe and Thomas the first drops of the storm-cloud that was descending dark and bloody over Paris fell, and men read too truly the omens in their fall, Felix Grey refused to take the warning that others were taking; he would not leave Paris, as almost all who could do so were leaving it.

In writing to the Yokes, he said that he had cast in his lot with that unhappy city, and should stay and "see it through." That there was a dark and terrible time coming he had no manner of doubt; but still he hoped that the storm would clear the sky, and that from the bloodshed would be born Liberty and Peace, as they had been born in travail and in storm ere now.

"Ah! he thinks," said Calla, with a sad smile, "that his ideal Communism—that Utopia he is always dreaming of—is the Communism of the Paris mob!"

"Instead of leaving it alone," said Mr. Yorke, "he will want to be putting his shoulder to the gigantic wheels, to help to push it uphill to his ideal. And the Juggernaut car is rolling downhill as fast as it can."

"And those who try to oppose its downward movement will only get crushed beneath it," observed Mrs. King.

A light flush mounted to Calla's cheek, and she lifted her head as

if to speak impulsively. But she checked herself, seemed abstracted a moment, and then said, gently and gravely, with a look on her face resembling Felix's own faithful, trustful expression,

"I would rather see him struggle to raise it than run out of the way. Felix would not *be* Felix, if he knew what fear for his own safety was."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"SHE IS MY TRUE LOVE TRULY WON."

THE time drew near when Lusada was to claim his bride. The merry month of May (and a fitful, capricious, whimsical maid in our climate that same fair May generally is!) entered into the land; and before she departed, during the last days of her declining reign, the wedding was to take place. The superstition as to marrying in May had first been forgotten by all the parties concerned; and when they recollected it they only smiled, and agreed to set it at defiance.

Tom Yorke is happy, and glad now to trust his daughter to Lusada's care; for he has grown fond and proud of his son-in-law elect, although a son-in-law of such wandering tastes (of whom it may safely be predicted that he will never be known to pass twelve consecutive months under the same roof) may not be altogether a model of what most parents would desire. But Yorke is a wanderer himself, and having known Julius Lusada a year, he feels no misgivings whatsoever.

Mrs. King, who loves Calla as a daughter, is content, just barely content, but not overflowingly delighted, with her niece's prospects. She is too discreet ever to utter a word of doubt, and is always in harmony with the occasion; but she does think in her heart that a man who would take a house and furnish it, and settle down to live on his settled income, or even a man of quiet domestic literary tastes, like "poor Felix!" would be a more desirable *parti* than this brilliant and successful adventurer, in spite of his twelve months' constancy, which does not appear to Mrs. King such a marvellous proof of devotion as it does to the lover himself.

As for Lusada, it is simply a truth that he has never been so faithful and devoted to any woman in his life as he is now, and has been ever since he loved her first, to Calla. Who shall solve the mystery of love, or define what manner of woman will win *this* man's heart, and at what man's feet *that* woman will yield up her life?

As the wedding-day draws nearer, and he begins to feel sure and certain of winning his prize (although still he has too much experience to feel sure of any cup reaching his lips till it has already

reached them), he asserts his right to her with a more open and avowed air of proprietorship—he claims her love, demands responsive caresses from her, with a kind of tyrannic tenderness. And she gives the response he claims freely, for she does love him, and feels a delicious dependence on his strength, a subjection to his plans and wishes far sweeter than empire over them. Yet her soul now and again turns unquietly and longingly towards that “soul twin-born with hers,” from whom she is for ever parted, turns not so much now in love as in longing to know—what of him?—how is he? For lately there has come no news of Felix Grey, either in newspaper or by letter; and they wonder how he is faring in the stricken city, where brothers war with brothers, and the son’s hand is at the father’s throat.

It is the day before that fixed for the bridal, which is to be a quiet one. Calla is in her room, in the centre of a confusion of millinery, which she is endeavouring to reduce to order, and arrange, preliminary to packing it in the brand new boxes that are ranged along the wall. She is singing softly to herself, as her pleased eyes rest upon the folds of shining silk, the filmy laces, and the transparent gossamery fabrics. She takes a true woman’s delight in the appareling of her beauty now; that deep delight in it came to her only with love, but did not die with love’s first blight; it lives stronger than ever in her now, in her second sunshine of love and hope and joy.

The servant announces that Mr. Lusada is below, and wishes to speak to her. A quick bright blush mounts to Calla’s cheek, she springs hastily up, dropping the white muslin dress she was shaking and folding, and flings it carelessly on a heap of its gay-coloured comrades, as she turns to the mirror. She is in a hurry, but she has time to pass a comb over her hair, and smooth back a stray tress, and tie the locket he gave her round her neck, with a coy smile at the pretty image that smiles back at her. Then she runs swiftly downstairs, light of foot and heart, with a soft sparkle of pleasure in her eyes, and the lovely colour that had flushed up at his arrival still mantling in her cheek.

Lusada smiles as he greets her, but it is with a grave and somewhat constrained smile, and he keeps her hand in his as he looks at her earnestly.

“What is the matter?” asks Calla standing still, all the brightness suddenly fading out of her face.

“Nothing is the matter, dear.”

“Something is wrong,” she answers positively.—“something troubles you.”

“Something did trouble me,” he replies—“the doubt—the doubt whether I should or should not show you a letter I’ve had. But I have made up my mind; it is right that you see it.”

"A letter!—from Felix?" Her woman's instinct leaps instantly to that conclusion.

His face falls a little, and that additional cloud on his brow tells her not only that she has guessed right, but that her so rapidly guessing right causes him a pang more of sorrow than of anger.

"I have brought it for you to read," he says quietly. He takes a letter from his pocket, and as he gives it to her, he notices her paleness, and adds quickly—"Don't look so scared, dear; nothing to frighten you; read, see."

She sees, as he unfolds the letter, that the writing—Felix's well-known clear hand—is tremulous and less clear than usual. What Felix says is this:—

"DEAR OLD FELLOW,—

"If you have been wondering at my silence, here comes its explanation. On one of my rambles through Belleville, I was struck by a shell a few weeks ago, and have not been able to move. I am better now, but have been bad; am still lame, unable to stand. I am with the Lemoignes—Calla will remember them—Angélique and Jeannette of the mill at La Basse-Rive. They are ardent Communists—Jacques, the husband, a worshipper of Delescluze. They are very good to me, but the horrors of this fratricidal siege do not conduce to the peace of mind likely to lead to strength of body.

"When the Versailles troops enter, I fear there will be worse work than ever. I am not able to move from this quarter, and if I could I would not run away from these poor kind souls who have nursed me while I lay helpless. Fate has cast my lot in with them without choice of mine. If we weather the storm, you and I may recall old happy days together yet. If not—well, old friend, the separation will only be a longer one by more or less years. Are you married yet? If so, give your wife an old friend's love and heartiest good wishes. She will be safe—happy—with you. I am tired now, so good-bye. You will hear from me when these coming days are over, if things do not go ill with me.

"How history repeats itself! God help these poor creatures—all—all in the time that is coming upon them. Yours ever,

"FELIX GREY."

The last few lines were more tremulously written than the rest, and straggled wandringly over the page with a sad suggestiveness.

There was not so much to alarm them in this letter; but she read it, as he had read it, by the light of the later news, of the telegrams that told him how the Versailles troops were entering Paris, and the days of bloodshed had come. They knew furies were let loose, and the spirit of murder was abroad there; and

something of involuntary foreboding in the tone of the letter struck them both. And the simple words, that betrayed his never-dying thought for her, pierced Calla's heart like a mortal stab. She was white as death when she had read it through.

"Wounded! Alone! In a Communist house—in Belleville. And the troops are pressing on through Paris even now!" she said under her breath, and brokenly, as if the words fell unconsciously from her lips. She had not looked at Lusada; her eyes, full of desperate dismay as they rose from the letter, did not seek his face.

"Calla?" he said. The tone was of inquiry. What had he to inquire? *She* had nothing to say—nothing to answer. The thought that Felix was in danger filled her mind, and for the moment shut out all other thoughts, all other feelings, all other fears.

"Wounded, helpless, and alone!" she repeated with a shudder, and a catching of the breath like a sob.

"Look at me, Calla," he said, seizing both her hands in his with an abruptness not usual in his manner to her. She looked up obediently, with a sort of vague, piteous pleading in her eyes. "Do not be angry with me!" those large, lovely eyes said. But they did not say, "Your love can comfort me for all beside."

He held her two hands close and fast, and watched her face with intent earnestness as he said,

"If you will it so, Calla, to-morrow—on the day that should have been our wedding day—I will be by Felix's side! I have friends in Versailles—I have friends in Paris. No harm is likely to come to Felix if I am with him. Say—shall I go?"

She had started as he spoke; she looked at him now with a strange new flash of light and passion in her eyes; her lips parted as if to speak, yet rested silent, as if struck statue-still and dumb before they could find utterance. He waited for her to answer, but she answered never a word—only gazed at him with that strange, sudden glory, illuminating her face, rapt as if in adoration. He read her silence aright.

"I will go, Calla—I will go to-night," he said quietly, and very tenderly.

She drew a long, shuddering breath, and her lips quivered. She tore her hands from his clasp so suddenly that it seemed for a second as if her impulse was to push him away from her. But she freed her hands only to fling her arms around his neck, to throw herself upon his breast, to look full into his eyes with that rapt gaze of passionate pride and love intensified.

He could never forget those eyes of hers, in the full glory of that look which they had never worn till now; he could never forget her voice when she found utterance at last.

"You—*you!*" she whispered, in melting, thrilling, trembling tones, that shot fire and lightning through his veins when poured

into his ears in the voice he loved so well. "You go to him? My hero!—my noblest, bravest! Go then. Yes, go to him. Take *all* my heart, all my soul with you, my love, my love! Go to him; it is what he would have done for you!"

"I know it. I will go!" he said, clasping her impetuously closer in his arms. "Could I have stayed content in my own love and my own joy, and left my truest friend in danger and alone, I would not be worthy of the love for which I would sell my soul."

"You need not sell your soul for the love that is yours—your own for ever now. Leave me—go to *him*. But oh, my darling, take care, take care of yourself. For all our sakes, guard yourself well. Julius, I love you—I *love* you! Guard yourself safe, and come back safe to *me*!"

They had been plighted lovers for twelve months now, but she had never said to him "I love you" with such a passionate cry of truth before.

"Do not fear for me. If you knew, my darling, how many storms I have weathered, you would waste no anxiety on me in this matter. Now see, sweetest, you must not fret or fear. Either by force with the troops, by money, or by the help of friends, I will get into the Belleville quarter. And when once I am there, let me only find Felix (and you see I have the clue where to seek him, and I take him in my care! Down in the cellars if shells are flying; to the ambulance if he is badly hurt; with the troops if they will protect us; out of Paris by begged, borrowed, bought, or stolen means! Ah! trust to me! I will bring Felix safely through if mortal man may. And when I come back to you, *then*, dearest, *then*?"

"Then you shall never, never know one moment's care that I can suffer for you or save you from—never a moment's doubt that you are all the world to me!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"FOR HE WAS STRONG IN THE LAND OF THE DEAD."

By the time that Julius Lusada arrived in Paris, the sky over Paris was red as blood with the lurid light of fire, and blotted with the black smoke coiling up from the blazing palaces. The enraged troops were pouring through the streets, their death-dealing columns converging from all sides towards the eastern quarter of the city; the insurgents, desperate in this their last struggle, were fighting barricade after barricade.

Paris was writhing like a scorpion in its circle of fire, and driving its burning fangs into its own heart.

Wherever the eye turned the fierce tongues of flame were darting skywards. The temples of law and luxury, of state and church and pleasure, were engulfed alike in the spreading devastation. The Hotel de Ville was a living furnace; the Théâtre Lyrique and the Porte St. Martin were glowing pillars of flame; from the Palais de Justice, and from the Ministry of Finance, the fire leaped and roared exultant; the cupola'd roof had dashed down into the burning wreck that was the Tuileries a little while ago. Still amongst the general destruction, while ruin reigned in the beautiful Place de la Concorde—how strange a misnomer it sounds when thought of in connection with those days!—while round the Palais Royal the eager flames licked longingly, while on and under the barricade that cut across the Rue de Rivoli the corpses lay as they had fallen—still the towers of Notre Dame stood tall and unshaken: still the Arc de Triomphe looked down the Champs Elysées, untouched in its solitary state.

From the curling waves of flame a thick black smoke was borne up on the northward wind, and brooded like a pall over the city where Death was holding red carnival that day.

The Reign of Terror had taken possession again for a brief season of its long-deserted throne. Even where there was not battle there was slaughter. To be accused was to be convicted, and carried to summary execution; the revenge on murder plunged madly into murder itself, and with red hands wreaked its retribution, so that even to be suspected was to be shot down like a dog, dragged to a dog's grave.

"Looking for a friend who is lying wounded over in Belleville?" said one who knew Paris and the Parisians well, to Lusada. "You are mad. Turn back while you may. No man's life is safe for an hour."

Julius Lusada smiled, and went on his way. The more difficult the adventure, the more honour to accomplish it, and that he would successfully achieve what he intended to do he never for a moment had a doubt. Having once embarked on an enterprise, to relinquish it and turn back was to his nature a simple impossibility.

The very danger was to him like the lamp to the moth. The thirst of adventure, the enjoyment of risk and hazard, that had swayed his youth and had given the bent to his whole life, possessed him now. The atmosphere of war and blood and fire and murder intoxicated him like wine! The rattle of the musketry was to him as the bugle to the old war-horse: the lurid red in the sky, and the fierce tongues of flame that darted up from the burning ruins thrilled him with the passion of peril, the delight of daring!

Fear was a quality absolutely unknown to him. He did not com-

prehend it. The meaning of the words "safe" and "dangerous," as regarded himself, were like some foreign language to him. If he thought of danger at all, it was only to reflect calmly that he would die when his time came, and could no more retard the written hour of death by shirking, than hasten it by daring, danger. He was steady and cool as if lounging in a drawing-room, and as confident in the successful termination of his enterprise as if no obstacle had lain in his way; and through the burning streets and the bloody scenes that made Paris a terror to the civilized world, while barricade after barricade was falling, and men and women were fighting like wild beasts, and like wild beasts cut down, while the troops were surging on like avenging furies, he pressed forward calmly and collectedly to the goal he had set himself.

In a small room on the *rez-de-chaussée* of the house was his shelter, Felix Grey was lying alone—alone with the exception of a little girl, who sat nursing a battered doll on the floor. This was "la petite Jeannine, of the Mill," near La Basse-Rive, the pretty child whom Calla and Isabel had petted "in the happy time."

No one else was in the room, no one else, so far as Felix knew, in the house. The family who had filled the house that morning were all gone—Jacques and Louis were fighting on the barricades; Angélique had followed them, to fight or nurse, to hurt or heal, who shall say? Jeannette had waited awhile, but she too, once the fair, healthy mistress of the Mill, had become the very creature of the Revolution now. The Revolution called on all its children, and Jeannette was drawn to obey the call that came, in fire and shot. She too had gone. Felix and the child were left alone.

He lay there listening, fretting himself into a worse fever than had laid its hot hold on him already, longing to arise and go forth and see. He knew that he was safer there, but he would have bartered all assurances of safety for an hour's use of his disabled limbs. Tied to his couch, he must lie helpless, passive, whilst around him History was enacting! The very women had flown into the vortex of the danger and the turmoil, and he lay there, crushed down by mortal illness, but suffering more just now from the sense of loneliness and helplessness than from any physical pain.

Yet it had been a hard time he had had to go through since the shattering shell had struck him senseless; sharp suffering and semi-starvation, fever whose banishing illusions, and sleep whose half delirious dreams had rendered the waking hours of utter unrest more weary. How often in those lonely hours, when he was lost to all consciousness of where he was or what ailed him, the shadowy image of a girl tall and white as a lily, with coils of midnight hair,

"Making her doubly fair, thus darkly set,"

had grown out of the darkness and glided to his side ! How often in the moan of the night wind he had heard her voice whisper the old sweet words, and in the midnight silence listened with strained ears to the delusive sound of the soft rustle of her dress sweeping nearer—nearer—lain with closed ears, deeming that she was bending over him and her breath stirred his hair, dreading to open his eyes lest the sense of that soothing presence should vanish.

Although her ghostly image seemed impalpable, and always evaded him when he sought to seize the white hand he used to see gleaming faintly through the shadows, yet those hours when she so haunted the dreary little room bore a balm to him that seemed to cool the fever. But there were other times when for hours and hours of burning unrest, he lived over those few moments on the deck of the Dover boat, and wasted his soul in the vain craving of that last look again—saw her for ever fading from his sight, saw the green waves wash in between them, saw the gulf for ever widening, and far in the dimmest distance saw the last glimpse of her face lingering and lost, as the last light of the vanished sunset lingers and is lost from off the furthest wave.

Now, however, these illusions one and all had died away. With a clear and cruel consciousness of gnawing pain and sinking strength, of the awful loneliness in which he lay helpless in this distracted land of horrors crueller than war, so far from help or home, he waited—watched with a curious calmness the slow symptoms he knew meant mortal danger, creep through every limb—watched with the eager interest that weakness dimmed, but could not destroy, to hear what chapter of history was writing itself in the life blood of Paris's rent heart this day. Life had little personally left for him now. As one taken out of himself, and only tied to his physical frame by a sense of suffering, he listened, and wondered, and craved to be once more, if only for an hour, the man he had been, who could have stood in the front, and sought the fight, and dared the utmost dangers of those terrible days.

"What would this day's work be?" he thought.

The child who with him was left alone in the rooms was restless and fretful. "Where was maman?" she kept asking. "Why did not maman return?" She would run out to the front door in spite of Felix's warning cry.

"Jeannine! come back then; there is always danger in the street. Did I not promise thy mother to keep thee here? But tell me, then, Jeannine," as she came back to his side, "is the street quiet—what did you hear or see?"

"There is a woman who is crying and there are men talking; and there is always the noise *là-bas*."

"There will be more women who cry before it is done," muttered Felix. "Is not the noise coming nearer?"

The noise to which they listened was the confusion of outcries and the reverberation of musketry at the barricades. Louder and louder, and clearer and clearer the echoes reached them; shouts of triumph, deep savage cries of despair, volley after volley of shot, now and then a piercing scream in a woman's voice. Little Jeannine got frightened and first clung to Felix's hand, and then burst into tears, and crying out, "Where is maman?" rushed away from him towards the street door. Felix called to her to come back in vain. Presently he heard her speak to somebody, crying in a frightened childish voice,

"Who are you?—you are not come to kill us?"

Then he heard an answer given to the child—only a few words, a half-laugh; but at that tone Felix started. That footstep too! surely it sounded like one that he should know among a thousand!

"Jeannine!" he called, in a voice to which sudden excitement lent a momentary delusive ring of strength, "*qui est là?*"

"Aha! I have found you then!" said a well-known accent as Julius Lusada swung the door back and entered the room. "Here I am, old fellow! how goes it with you?" he continued, grasping Felix's thin weak hand in his strong and steady clasp.

The two friends look upon each other again, the contrast between them more vivid and startling than ever. Lusada was in the full exuberance of exultant strength and conscious triumph over difficulties, with the old gleam of conquest and self-confident power in his eye. Felix was worn to the mere spectre of himself; starvation and suffering had wasted him nearly to a skeleton; there were the purple shadows that forbode so fatally hollowing his temples; and his eyes looked unnaturally large and dark from the pale and sunken face as they stared up in amazed recognition.

"You here, Lusada? *you?*" he gasped breathlessly, half incredulous of his senses, notwithstanding the warm and solid hand that held his and proved its owner no ghost. Then with a sudden terror of sharp anxiety, he added, "Calla is not in Paris?"

"Calla? no! do you think I'd bring *her* into this hell of fire and murder?"

"But you—how came *you* here?"

"Why, I've just come to get you out of this."

"For me! Lusada—too generous!" said Felix painfully. "But leave me—all is danger here—keep yourself safe; *you* have a future. My life is too far gone—to be worth saving."

"You are worth a dozen dead men yet," said Lusada stoutly. "We have got to effect a move to some safer quarter, and then to nurse you round to strength again. That's the plan."

"And you—have risked your life like this for me?"

"Little risk enough. Besides, old fellow, when was danger a word in our dictionary, when we went prospecting together down

the Pacific coast? It's not a word that has any place ever between you and me."

"How did you get here?"

"Crossed the barricade with the troops. It takes me back to the old days to smell powder again."

That brief allusion to "the old days" bore Felix back to them with a startling suddenness. They flashed before him vivid as the present hour. He looked at Lusada, and saw him even as he used to be then, and half fancied they must be back together in the old wild life of the Western hemisphere, and that all since then must have been a dream.

Just as he had looked in those old days—when life as now was at stake, and when his soul was stirred by the flash of steel and crash of shot—Lusada looked now, the light of battle in his eye, the flush of confident power on his face, the wind-blown hair pushed roughly off his brow, the clouded steel of the pistol he had hastily thrust away gleaming half-hidden in his breast. Just so Felix had seen him stand in the scarlet light of a southern sunrise, when an alarm had been given, and the men started up and turned to him to wait their leader's word.

As on the vision of a drowning man they say the pictures of the past blaze forth, so in Felix's mind—misty and half-dazed with past feverish allusions, shadowed by a forecast of the great darkness that was looming near—for one moment this picture flamed out, vivid as the last leap of the sinking fires, then faded and faded away. The four walls of the little room closed round him again: he knew the perils that circled them there.

"You crossed the barricade?" he said. "The troops will be down this street then. Where are they—all—who left me this morning?"

"Who left you? where are they?"

"At the barricades. They are gone—all but the child——"

"We had best stay here till the streets are quiet," observed Lusada practically, considering his plan. "Then we'll make a move by the shortest cut, out of all this—as far away as you have strength to keep up."

This last clause was a necessary one, for Felix, the transient strength of excitement past, had fallen back looking more like death than life. Lusada, however, felt no sinking of doubt. Even from the strange and deepening shadow on his friend's face he did not forebode the worst.

He had seen many a sorely-stricken comrade rally and revive. He had no fear lest the fortune that had favoured him so far should desert him before the end. He had come through danger to find Felix, and had come in safety and success. He would return through danger bearing Felix with him, safe and successful still,

he did not doubt. It was not the first time he had hazarded himself to drag a wounded fellow-soldier out of the fray; and the goddess of Fortune had always smiled on such of his efforts.

He quietly took command of things in general; soothed Jeannine; sent her for cold water; opened the window of the close little room; took a flask of brandy from his pocket, and revived Felix's exhausted strength therewith, though only to a feeble flicker—the utmost of which it was now susceptible.

Presently the sound of a bullet near at hand cut the air.

"That shot came from *this* house," said Felix, raising himself on his pillow with a start.

"No; I think not," rejoined Lusada, bending an attentive ear to listen.

"Lefevre—upstairs!" said Felix faintly, pointing. "He is mad! If he is firing on the troops, all in this house are lost!"

"I'll see," said the other promptly, his hand instinctively moving to the pistol he carried.

He went to the front door to take a look round and note the aspect of things—to see whence the shot had come, if it had hit any living mark, and whether there were soldiers in sight. As he stepped across the threshold, another bullet cut the air from the window of a house opposite, and he saw that these were the welcomes given to a detachment of the troops that were just turning into the street.

He stood there calm and confident, in all the strength of his splendid manhood, fearless as though these whizzing bullets had been but sugar-plums flung by a child, triumphant in the accomplishment of his enterprise, never doubting that all would go well, not rashly flinging himself forward into the thick of the peril, but just casting one cool and practical look of survey round.

He had but time given him for that one look—the old Indian squaw long ago had read his fate aright! Even in that instant, before he could balance in his mind whether to step forward or back, there came the crash of musketry. Bullets rained from the windows on to the advancing soldiers; a rattling hail of lead from the soldiers swept the street. And one bullet was billeted with Julius Lusada's name, and—whether sent his way by aim or accident—struck him straight to the heart.

Life had smiled upon him, and Fortune had of late made him her favourite.

Death was as kind as they; she smote him sudden as a thunder-bolt, snatched him to her arms in the full splendour of his strength, leaving him no time for prayer or pain, for parting message or farewell word, for thought to realize that his enterprise had failed. For only one moment he reeled against the wall. Then, down on the noonday of that glowing life a merciful darkness closed at once.

He fell dead across the threshold of the house without a word or cry, his fate unknown to the man for whose sake he had hazarded his life, and lost!

Felix lay and listened. He heard the volleys of musketry, the outcries in the street. He heard dimly amongst the noises a sound like a heavy fall, but heard no groan, no voice he knew. Yet that fall—it sounded near at hand. Little Jeannine was crouched trembling by his side. He grasped the child's hand, and raised himself on his pillow and held his breath to listen. He called his friend. Still no sound of Lusada's voice. Lusada would never have left him! Why did he not answer or return? What was that fall?

With a supreme and violent effort—an effort which to save his own life he could scarcely have made—Felix flung himself off his couch. He could not stand, but he dragged himself along by the floor and the wall. As he gained the passage, the soldiers streamed in over the body of Julius Lusada which lay on the threshold. Felix spoke no word to them, took no more notice of them than if they had been men of wood; he only struggled with the last effort of his ebbing strength to where Lusada lay, and fell by his side, and felt with trembling and fainting hand if there yet remained a quiver of life in the pulseless heart that but now had beat so brave and true.

Jacques and Louis never came back from the barricades. Jeannette was never seen or heard of more. Of all those who had left the house that morning but one returned. Only Angélique came back to find that Death had set his red cross of possession on the door. The only life left in the house was the child Jeannine, cowering, trembling in the corner, where she had crept and hidden for safety.

Upon the threshold lay the bodies of two men, one a stranger, whose face yet Angélique had once seen before in the happy and half-forgotten days of La Basse-Rive, dead and cold, shot through the heart—the other with his arms flung across the stranger's breast. And when Angélique raised his head and turned the hidden face to the light, she knew that it was Felix Grey, and that the last lingering spark of life was extinct.

So these two trusty comrades, who had fought the same battles, and loved the same woman, true friends and generous rivals to the last,

“In their death were not divided!”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“NOT ALL UNHAPPY, HAVING LOVED GOD’S BEST.”

THE days go by, and each day seems a month to Calla as she waits for news. Slow morning creeps by after wakeful night, and weary afternoon draws on to anxious evening. Her heart leaps into her throat at every postman’s knock; every ring at the bell takes her breath away; she passes all her days in watching at the window—watching for the first glimpse of Julius Lusada’s figure turning into sight, or for the messenger or the letter that he will surely send soon.

She grows in a few days so white and wan with anxiety that they insist upon her leaving the house for daily walks; it takes them all the power of their influence to tear her from that perpetual watching at the window, and fairly force her into the open air. Yet they are strangely reluctant to utter a harsh word to her now. As days pass on they are more and more gentle to her; they utter no reproach, ask no questions, hurt her by no speculation; they do not know why they treat her so tenderly, for there is no reason yet why all should not go well. Still they look upon her with an anxious forecast of compassion, as though they saw the glittering sword hung close over her head, and watched each moment for the blow to fall.

One day her father persuaded her out for a stroll with him; and when fresh air and exercise have brought a little transient colour to her pale cheeks, he is satisfied, and proceeds alone on his way to the City, and allows her to return home, whither she hastens as fast as her feet can carry her. For may not the postman have been? Is there ever an hour in the day when there may not come, a letter, a telegram, even he himself (or, if Fate be very kind, *they themselves*) in person? She hardly waits for the maid to open the door before she puts her eager question,

“Any letters?”

“No, miss. There is a gentleman called, miss; he is upstairs with Mrs. King.”

“Who is it?”

“I don’t know, miss. A stranger; a foreign-looking gentleman.”

Calla flies with winged feet part way up the stairs; but on the first landing she pauses. One of those perfectly useless, but very common, and sometimes unaccountable presentiments that only precede the knowledge of the truth by a few minutes lays hold on her. She passes slowly up to her own room, trembling so that she has to hold the balusters as she ascends the stairs. She takes off her hat and gloves—slowly. Why hurry to rush upon evil days? And if

the coming days be good—ah! *if*! if they be good, why has this trembling seized her?—if they be good, what matters a moment more or less?

She tries to draw her breath calmly as she approaches the drawing-room, tries—in vain—to steady her nervous hand as she turns the handle of the door and enters.

Her aunt starts violently as she sees Calla, and looks aghast and helpless, and her eyes are full of tears. The stranger gentleman is there; he rises respectfully, and bows with grave deference; but he, too, looks pale and uncomfortable, and when Mrs. King has said nervously and flurriedly, "This is Miss Yorke," all three are silent.

Calla knows that there are evil tidings. They see that she knows it; but she is thinking—whom do these tidings concern? Julius Lusada would never send a stranger to break to her bad news of Felix. But Felix—can *he* have sent a messenger to bear bad news of Lusada? It must be Lusada to whom some harm has happened.

"My darling child," begins Mrs. King brokenly and incoherently, as the stranger evidently looks for her to open the subject. "this gentleman has called—he was a friend of——"

"*Was!*" repeats the girl gaspingly, pressing both hands upon her heart—"a friend of *whom*?"

Before they either of them answer, her eyes have lit upon something upon the table—the gleam of something golden partly folded in a half-open paper. Mrs. King sees she notices it, and instinctively, hurriedly, puts out her hand as if to push it out of Calla's way. But Calla is too quick for her; and has seized it already.

This broad gold locket is Lusada's; she knows it well, and needs not to open it to see whose face is within it. But this—this other locket in enamelled black and gold, with F. G. engraved on it—this locket she has known since first she loved Felix Grey, and the same face, she knows, used to be concealed within it! Is it there still, and with these souvenirs she knows too well that neither of the two men would have parted during life! So, like a flash of fork lightning, the whole truth bursts upon her at a blow, and smites her to the heart. She knows that with her own lips she has sealed the doom of all she loved. Yet she takes it more calmly than they could have hoped. She scarcely speaks, except to beg to be told all; she listens in utter silence and stillness to the story told by a friend of Lusada's, who, seeking him, had found Angélique lamenting over the dead. Only when he told how, near the heart of each of the two dead men, hidden in each breast, they had found the lockets with the same girl's face (the same fair young face now listening so marble, pale, and still), and how he had brought them to her, thinking she would alike treasure them as relics, and receive them as proofs,

and how he had at first hesitated as to whether to bring them to her or bury them on the lifeless hearts that had treasured them—then she stopped his story by a wild and piercing cry, and Mrs. King rushed to raise her as she fell, as if lightning had smitten her, to the ground—fell not in merciful unconsciousness, but writhing in the convulsion of an anguish which no blessed relief of tears came to soften or to soothe.

She had tried to endure too calmly, and Nature avenged herself on the unnatural restraint by striking her down into one of those paroxysms—such as only follow by reaction on a blow too silently borne—that risk the reason, and lay even life in the balance.

Mental sufferings, like bodily fevers, will run their course and pass through their various phases. The midnight closed round Calla then as if no faintest dawn could ever glimmer through its blackness. She could see no ray of comfort, but only a deeper shadow, in the thought that none dared utter aloud to her, but that yet unspoken beat in every pulse of her heart, burning deeper in its mute reproach than words could ever brand it—the thought that even had the sacrifice not been made in vain, had Felix come back in safety from the jaws of death, *alone*, between herself and him, giant-like and ghastly, must ever have stood the memory of the life that had freely risked for his sake at her bidding, lost for him through her. For ever the red shadow of that past must have followed them, and stretched between them a spectral arm that waved them apart. Death could not sever them more than life must surely have done. Could they ever, even were all other barriers between them broken down, have reached hands across that grave?

Days passed, and were dark as nights to her. When grief had expended its first violent outbreak, and its very passion had exhausted itself, and a dangerous lethargy was insidiously threatening to creep over her—while the numbness of a dull agony held her, body and soul, so that the girl she had been seemed as dead as those for whom she mourned—while yet her family dared scarcely breathe the name of Lusada to her in fear of its effect—one morning she fell asleep, and drifted away from waking sorrows into a fair dreamland.

Since the news fell on her she had only slept to dream of pain and terror until now. But now she dreamt that she was with Felix on the sands, near La Basse-Rive again, and all the clouds that darkened her life had sunk away and left the horizon clear,

“As in the happy time!”

She saw again the yellow burning sands, the low, heath-crowned cliffs, the lazy sea of southern blue. Felix was by her side; the very book they had been reading on the morning of her betrothal lay open on her lap; she knew and recognized even the cover of

that Oriental fairy-tale; every detail of that unforgotten scene reproduced itself clearly as in a photograph. She read the words again,

"I have been beloved by the noblest three on earth."

And Felix, smiling, said, with the old familiar look, though not in the old words, yet as gaily as of old,

"Three! why, are you not content with us two? Have we not sufficed?"

Then with a vague sense as of some uncomprehended loss, as if through the veil of the dream that hid her real grief from her there broke some faint glimmer of consciousness of sorrow, somewhere, she asked,

"But *where is he*? I never meant him to stay away so long. Will he never come back to us?"

And as if in answer to her wonder, looking up, she saw Lusada coming across the sands to them. Plainly as ever in life she saw the sun catching the tawny gold of his thick curling hair, she met the softening smile of his grave piercing eyes as they rested on her face. She turned from Felix and sprang towards *him*, and cried,

"Have you forgiven me, oh! my love?" and his voice answered,

"Lady mine, I had never anything to forgive."

And even as she stretched her arms towards him, she awoke—awoke with a cry and a sob of disappointment to reality, yet murmuring to herself, as if still in the enthrallment of dreamland, still stretching her arms out to the empty air.

"Beloved!—yes, I have been beloved by the noblest two of earth."

From the hour of that brief passing dream the tide began to turn and bear her slowly back towards consolation and solace. Tennyson seldom wrote truer words than

"It was but a dream; yet it yielded a dear delight
To have looked though but once in a dream upon
 eyes so fair,
That had been in a weary world my one thing bright!"

She felt no longer utterly lost from them and far away from them. Only a dream! but it had brought them near her. And with them near her could she despair? Beloved by the noblest! Yes, and in the hour of her need they too were with her now. When awaking darkly from the first blind agony of grief, she looked around for some light, for some help, it seemed that the true and faithful souls that would have guarded her on earth, answered to her call. They were with her in dreamland; their influence was round her in waking hours. The spirit of their love breathed in the air that gave her life, and upheld her as their living presence would have done.

Could she who had loved the strongest faint and fail under any burden? Could she who had loved the noblest droop into ignoble despair?

There came a day at last when a strange chance—a story told by a stranger, a name, a date, an unsuspecting word dropped by Isabel—revealed to Calla the secret which Felix carried to the grave unuttered. And in the light of this new truth she saw how the web of Destiny had subtly and silently wound them all in its unseen meshes—saw how, from the rash chivalry of one nature, the self-abnegation of the other, the fidelity that, springing from a root of virtue, had done as fatal work as crime, had been woven the triple meshes of the net. All things had worked together to an end. They had followed their fate, and she stood alone, with half a life before her, and love and joy behind.

Yet on the field whence every hope of joy for self, every dream and scheme for self have been wrenched up by the roots, fair flowers of self sacrifice and ministration spring and bloom. Calla's life is not wasted—will not be wasted whilst there is suffering in the world. There are fevered brows for her gentle hand to cool, stormy, sorrowful hearts for her gentle sympathy to soothe, sluggish, inert minds for her yet unquenched spirit to kindle to responsive fires, groping souls struggling towards the light for her to take by the hand and help. She has taken no vow, joined no sisterhood, shuts herself apart in no seclusion from the world. No outward token tells that she has put away all dreams of her own future and dedicated herself to others. But wheresoever sorrow and suffering call, there Calla is found.

There is a place for her to fill; there is work enough for her heart and hand. There is still the chance that no woman young and beautiful (out of a convent) can exclude herself absolutely and entirely from the possibilities of her life.

But those who know her best will feel amazement in their inmost hearts if Calla Yorke should ever marry or listen more to words of love.

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KELLY & CO., GATE STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, W.C. ;
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BEECHAM'S PILLS

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Are universally admitted to be worth a Guinea a Box for Bilious and Nervous Disorders, such as wind and pain in the Stomach, Sick Headache, Giddiness, Fulbness and Swelling after Meals, Dizziness and Drowsiness, Cold (hills, Flushings of Heat, Loss of Appetite, Shortness of Breath, Costiveness, Scurvy, Blisthes on the Skin, Disturbed Sleep, Frightful Dreams, and all Nervous and Trembling Sensations, &c. The First Dose will Give Relief in Twenty Minutes. This is no fiction, for they have done it in countless cases. Every sufferer is earnestly invited to try one Box of these Pills, and they will be acknowledged to be

Worth a GUINEA a Box.

For Females of all ages these Pills are invaluable, as a few doses of them carry off all humours, *open* all obstructions, and bring about all that is required. No female should be without them. There is no medicine to be found to equal BEECHAM'S PILLS for removing any obstruction or irregularity of the system. If taken according to the directions given with each Box, they will soon restore females of all ages to sound and robust health. This has been proved by thousands who have tried them and found the benefits which are ensured by their use.

For a Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, and all disorders of the liver, they act like magic, and a few doses will be found to work wonders upon the most important organs in the human machine. They strengthen the whole muscular system, restore the long lost complexion, bring back the keen edge of appetite, and arouse into action, with the reseed of health, the whole physical energy of the human frame. These are facts testified continually by members of all classes of society; and one of the best guarantees to the nervous and debilitated is BEECHAM'S PILLS have the largest sale of any patent medicine in the world.

**FULL DIRECTIONS ARE GIVEN
WITH EACH BOX.**

*Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine
Dealers everywhere, in Boxes at 1s. 11d.
and 2s. 6d. each.*

